English Nonconformity and Christ's Christianity

Class 2803P Book H185
General Theological Seminary Library
CHELSEA SQUARE. NEW YORK

PRESENTED BY
St. Stephen's Church, Boston.

REVEREND C. H. BRENT,

S. STEPHEN'S HOUSE,

BOSTON.

ENGLISH NONCONFORMITY

AND

CHRIST'S CHRISTIANITY.

BY THE SAME AUTHOR.

CHURCH OR CHAPEL?

An Eirenicon.

Crown 8vo, cloth boards, 5s.

THIRD EDITION. With Additions and an Appendix.

"It is desirable that Churchmen and Nonconformists should thoroughly understand one another's position and principles, and on several matters of importance Mr. Hammond, in this elaborate and scholarly treatise, has succeeded in removing misapprehensions."—THE BRITISH WEEKLY.

"We gladly give welcome without reserve, and praise without drawback, to Mr. Hammond's book. It is excellent in intention, and excellent in execution."—THE SPECTATOR.

"Mr. Hammond has the gift of clear and forcible statement; marshals his texts, facts, and arguments effectively; and has so garnished his pages with illustrations and quotations that the book is in no part ever dull. . . . It seems to us that he has covered the whole ground of debate betwixt Church and Chapel, and done so with commendable thoroughness. . . . As we have already intimated, the whole is very ably and well done. The tone and spirit are conciliatory."—THE GUARDIAN.

English Nonconformity

AND

Christ's Christianity.

BY

JOSEPH HAMMOND, LL.B., B.A.
VICAR OF ST. AUSTELL AND HON. CANON OF TRURO.

"Behold, the beginning of philosophy is the observation of how men contradict each other, and the search whence cometh this contradiction and the censure and mistrust of bare opinion."—EPICTETUS.

"In general all fatal false reasoning proceeds from people's having some one false notion in their hearts with which they are resolved all their reasoning shall comply."—RUSKIN.

London:
WELLS GARDNER, DARTON & CO.,
2, PATERNOSTER BUILDINGS, E.C.,
AND 44, VICTORIA STREET, S.W.

GOLDSMITHS' LIBRARY

280.3P
H185

59728

1893

VANDERBILT UNIVERSITY

PREFACE.

THE three years that have elapsed since, in a former work, I made a first attempt—a first through the press—towards healing or diminishing the divisions of our English Christianity, have only deepened my sense of the humiliation and reproach, the waste and the misery, which these same divisions occasion to the kingdom of peace and righteousness. To me it is a constant wonder that earnest, high-minded Christian men can sit down, I will not say contentedly, but with a sort of despairing acquiescence, whilst their holy religion, CHRIST'S religion, is scarred and crippled with so many schisms—and this, too, in the face of a growing indifference and an aggressive agnosticism. To me "our unhappy divisions" appear to threaten not only the efficiency, but the very existence of that Church of the living GOD, which is His chosen instrument for the regeneration of our race. "A house divided against a house falleth." It can only be because long use has accustomed them to this sorrowful spectacle, because

> "Their torments have by length of time
> Become their elements,"

that they have not, long since, started up with some-

thing like horror at the sight of our two hundred and sixty sects and denominations. I may be set down as an enthusiast, but I will confess that I cannot see the fair city of God, the city of our fathers' faith and hopes, lying waste—its walls with gaping breaches, its gates burned by its own sons, without "thoughts that do sometimes lie too deep for tears." O the pity of it, the pity of it! The wounded hands of the Church have been wounded by her friends! And I have the consolation of knowing that if I seem an enthusiast to-day, some to-morrow will justify me; of knowing that Christians must some day awake—are they not fast awaking already?—to a realisation of the wickedness of our dissensions and the hopelessness of converting the world so long as we continue to present a divided front to the enemy.

And so I send forth this second messenger to plead for peace and reconciliation. The *Eirenicon* of three years ago was a sort of *Apologia pro Ecclesia Anglicana;* it undertook to show that neither its doctrines nor its usages are such as to warrant the separations which, from time to time, have been made from it—even supposing that separation is ever lawful. In this I shall attempt to prove that separation, at least from the reformed Church of England, is distinctly unlawful. I shall raise the question whether secession from a community which is, and is allowed to be, GOD'S Church, despite its blemishes and abuses—a Church which God has not left—can ever be justified, and I shall insist that the only way of repairing the

fissures in our walls is a return on the part of the separatists to the historic Church of the land. I do not pretend that either concessions or reforms are unnecessary; but I affirm that, if they are necessary, they are much more likely to be secured by pressure from within than from without. I assert that CHRIST'S Christianity teaches us to protest and remain—never to withdraw.

And if in doing this I may seem to press hard on Nonconformists—though I defy them to find in these pages one single word that is meant to wound them—then I must ask them to remember that the questions and issues at stake are too momentous to permit of any speaking with bated breath and whispering humbleness. I venture to think that I may borrow those words: "I am in the place where I am demanded of conscience to speak the truth, and therefore the truth I speak, impugn it whoso list." I have consequently tried to be plain and pointed and incisive. I have done more; I have tried to impale Nonconformity on the horns of more than one dilemma. Believing secession to be no remedy, believing it indeed to be thoroughly opposed to the spirit and precepts of Christianity, I have not hesitated to say so, and to allege arguments in proof; arguments which, at any rate, challenge consideration, and which cannot be lightly brushed on one side. But I entreat our separated brethren to believe that the very last thought in my mind is to disparage them, to pain them, to score a victory

over them. My constant aim has been by manifestation of the truth to commend my conclusions to their consciences in the sight of God. If I have used one unfair or ungenerous word, I have only to learn what it is in order to withdraw it. I may be mistaken or misinformed, though I think not, but it shall never be said that I have stooped to fling about the fiery darts which Christian has too often hurled against Christian, nor will I, if I know it, stain my pages with sorrow of the meanest thing that feels. If I have aimed at the *fortiter in re*, I have striven no less after the *suaviter in modo*.

It only remains for me to add that my quotations are almost entirely drawn from Nonconformist sources, or from writers supposed to be in full sympathy with them.

I pray the Head of the Church, the same who loved it and gave Himself for it, to vouchsafe to use this volume to promote that visible and perfect oneness for which He prayed, and which is still the desire of His sacred heart.

WEIMAR, *February* 16, 1893.

CONTENTS.

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTION.

PAGES

English Christianity marked by its divisions—Which have increased apace of late years—Yet their wrongfulness or harmfulness is freely admitted—And men everywhere are yearning for reunion—This book offers one contribution towards reunion—It aims at proving that secession is sinful—Its shape suggested by Leslie's "Short and Easy Methods" — It professes to furnish several such "Methods"—But it does not dream of the speedy conversion of Dissenters—A consummation which does not depend on argument alone—It ought not to awaken any resentment, though it must inevitably do so—Dissenters themselves bewail our unhappy divisions—There is no arrogance in its arguments, though it denounces Nonconformity as contrary to Christianity — To prove any offence, men must disprove the argument—It is designed to provoke a reply, but it will studiously abstain from all other provocation 1–12

CHAPTER II.

NONCONFORMITY AND NONCONFORMITY—DISSENT AND DISSENT.

Christianity means the following of Christ—Christ's Christianity interpreted and illustrated by the Apostles—Nonconformity here understood to mean secession, though the original "Nonconformists" never separated—Citations in proof of this statement—Such nonconformists still found in the Church—This book only attempts to deal with separation—Nonconformists only blamed for their Nonconformity—Similarly, nothing is here said about mere dissent—Which is inevitable,

PAGES

whilst Dissent is nothing of the kind—On this distinction the argument turns—The book does not deal with objections to the Church—Except to show incidentally that they do not warrant a secession 13–24

CHAPTER III.

THE DEFINITION OF DISSENT—NONCONFORMIST CHURCHES UNKNOWN TO CHRIST'S APOSTLES.

English Nonconformity, separation from the Church in England—Foreign Nonconformity not dealt with here, and for sufficiently obvious reasons—The "Churches" of Scripture *visible* churches, and always described by their geographical position—Sectarian "churches" altogether unknown—Constitution of the Apostolic churches—Mention of a national or provincial church—Confederation of early churches inevitable—But the argument does not presuppose any National Church theory—Still less that national churches compose the church universal—It merely assumes that our parish congregations are churches—No trace of polychurchism in Holy Writ—Each Apostolic Church comprised all the Christians of the place—Such churches there were once in England—The Pre-Reformation Church one body—From such churches secession is sinful—But dissent from their teachings or disavowal of their practices may be a duty 25–38

CHAPTER IV.

THE RISE AND PROGRESS OF DISSENT IN ENGLAND.

No Nonconformity in the first century, and none in England before the Reformation—Though there was much dissent from the doctrines and usages of the Church—The Puritans dissented, but did not divide the Church—The first separatist communion about A.D. 1568—The *Brownists* or *Independents* the first to secede—Followed soon after by the *Romanists*, A.D. 1570—The *Baptists* the next to break away, A.D. 1633—Succeeded by the *Quakers* about A.D. 1646—Rise of the *Unitarians* about A.D. 1719—Even Unitarians under no moral compulsion to secede—But Unitarianism may call for excommunication—Secession of the *Methodists* about A.D. 1795—The reasons they alleged for separating—The English Church never separated

PAGES
from the Roman communion—Testimonies in proof of this assertion 39–61

CHAPTER V.

NONCONFORMITY CONTRARY TO THE EXAMPLE OF CHRIST.

The Hebrew people formed a church, and God's church—Or if not a "church," a religious community—That church or community honeycombed with corruptions—An "evil congregation" from its first beginning—Yet neither priest nor prophet ever counselled secession—The Jewish Church at its worst in the time of our Lord—In "head and members" then flagrantly corrupt—And much worse than the English Church since its Reformation—If secession from a corrupt communion is a duty, secession from it was a duty—And the more enlightened men were, the clearer the duty—Yet Christ never seceded nor suggested secession—He dissented, but permitted no Dissent—On the contrary, He conspicuously conformed to this corrupt church—Though it was unnecessary that He should do so—Moreover, He taught His disciples to remain in it—And they did remain, as long as that polity lasted—*Résumé* of the argument 62–77

CHAPTER VI.

NONCONFORMITY CONTRARY TO THE EXAMPLE OF CHRIST (*continued*).

It is alleged that Christianity differs altogether from Judaism—And that Dissent could not take place under the Law—But if so, then a Christian *may* remain in a corrupt church, or if not, God would assuredly have told us so—Moreover, if so, a Christian *must* not leave Christ's church—For the Gospel cannot make less of unity than did the Law—But Dissent *did* take place under Judaism, though it could not take place without sin—The sin of Jeroboam the sin of schism—He did then what Dissenters unconsciously do now—If his Dissent was sinful, how can ours be lawful?—Christianity being more spiritual and charitable than Judaism—Our Saviour Christ could have seceded without sin—Or could at least have withdrawn from the *synagogues*—Which were of purely human institution—And round which the corruptions of Judaism mainly clustered—

PAGES

Yet He never withdrew nor permitted His disciples to withdraw—What synagogues were, parish churches are—*Résumé* of this argument—No solution of the problem, that Judaism was shortly to be abrogated, or that Christ could remain where we cannot 78–94

CHAPTER VII.

NONCONFORMITY CONTRARY TO THE PRECEPTS OF CHRIST.

One at least of Christ's precepts decisive against separation—Examination of St. Matt. xxiii. 1–3—Character of the scribes and Pharisees—Unsparingly denounced by our Lord—Yet they were to be obeyed, because of their official position—Obedience to *good* men never enjoined—What was "Moses' seat"?—How the scribes came to occupy it—Our Lord gave audience to the doctors of the law—Although they were then hypocritical and corrupt—Conclusions: 1. The clergy always unworthy and sinful—2. Yet never worse than the scribes were—3. The clergy now sit in the scribes' seat and in the Apostles' and in Christ's seat—4. And therefore entitled to no less reverence than the scribes—But only to be obeyed so long as they occupy that seat—We are to do as they *say*, not as they *do*—This counsel not fraught with danger, for the worst men can give good counsel, and it is safer to obey constituted authority than to be a law to ourselves—5. Dissent directly opposed to Christ's command—This command applies to *ex cathedra* teachings only 95–119

CHAPTER VIII.

NONCONFORMITY CONTRARY TO THE COMBINED TEACHING AND EXAMPLE OF CHRIST.

Our Lord's teaching also found in the Epistles to the seven churches of Asia—Those churches not *secession* churches—Yet "churches," notwithstanding their corruptions—Some of them were exceedingly corrupt—More so, perhaps, than any church of a later age—Yet no one seceded, or was taught to secede from them—Yet secession, if ever a duty, must have been so then—But our Lord neither counselled nor countenanced it—And this because a corrupt church is still Christ's

PAGES
church—If the Head remains, the members must do the same—No use to say they were "not forbidden to secede" —They *were* forbidden by His example and by His silence—For secession is either a duty or a sin—Besides, He had spoken on this subject already—Summary of the argument 120–129

CHAPTER IX.

NONCONFORMITY CONDEMNED BY THE PRAYER OF CHRIST.

Dissent a defiance of our "Lord's Prayer" in St. John xvii. —That prayer offered at a supreme moment, and presented three or four times—In this prayer *we* were contemplated and included—Moreover, this prayer Christ prays still—And in it our Lord appeals to us—And requires us to pray "after this manner"—But what is the unity we are to pray for?—Was it a mere "union of hearts"?—The objection that "unity can coexist with diversity" examined—Can unity coexist with division?—No unity when the severance was made—No real unity has sprung up since—Testimonies in proof of this assertion—Objection that "the human race is one" examined—Objection that "all churches can no more be one than all kingdoms"—The oneness Christ prayed for (1) visible and (2) perfect—Neither visible nor perfect union can coexist with Dissent—Disunion partly accounts for the comparative failure of Christianity—We teach the world to distrust all religion—The union of Christians should be like that of the Godhead—Summary of the argument 130–146

CHAPTER X.

NONCONFORMITY CONTRARY TO THE EXAMPLE OF THE APOSTLES.

All the Apostolic churches impure—This *must* have been so—No such thing as a pure church—And the Apostolic churches especially obnoxious to evils—The early Christians not better than those of later ages—Examination of the Acts of the Apostles—And of the Pauline Epistles—Some of the early churches grossly impure—Examination of the Epistles to the Corinthians—Yet these Apostolic churches always recognised as churches of God—As such, the Apostles could not and did

PAGES

not leave them—But if secession ever lawful, then secession from the church at Corinth both lawful and necessary—Examination of the plea that Nonconformity is necessary for doing God's work, and is compelled by the corruptions of the Church—The corruptions of the early church equalled those of any later period—Yet the Apostles neither seceded nor permitted secession 147–165

CHAPTER XI.

NONCONFORMITY CONTRARY TO THE PRECEPTS OF THE APOSTLES.

The Epistles contain no *express* warnings against Dissent—Because Dissent then never contemplated—And the Epistles are "occasional writings"—But they strike at the root of all Dissent by condemning the tempers out of which it springs—The Scriptures denounce all divisions *within* the church as opposed to the spirit of Christianity—And the Epistles expressly forbid them—But if divisions *in* the church are condemned, how much more divisions which break up the church—As sinful to say "I am of Wesley," as "I am of Paul"—No such thing as a peaceful withdrawal—Examination of secessions in England—Secession never made peaceably—Not even those from the Wesleyan body—And if it involves no contentions, it results in divisions—Dr. Marcus Dods on divisions—Summary of the argument—Objections—The Church not chargeable with *dichostasia*—Churchmen have not seceded, but Dissenters—Yet Dissenters call us bigots if we stand apart from them—Churchmen differ in opinion, but agree to differ 166–183

CHAPTER XII.

NONCONFORMITY CONTRARY TO THE PRINCIPLES OF THE APOSTLES.

Distinction between precept and principles, if somewhat arbitrary, yet convenient—Principle I.: The Church forms "one body"—And "body," must refer to the visible Church—Nonconformists use the word of an organised community—It is of the essence of a *body* to be visible—And the word used of guilds, &c., in St. Paul's day—Interpreted of a visible community by Dr. Beet and Dr. Milligan—The Christian body

PAGES

or community "one"—One in England to time of Reformation—How "schisms in the body" have arisen—Summary of the argument—Objections—The body has been corrupted—Many Nonconformists are members—Principle II.: The Church forms a family—Scripture proof—But shameful when a family falls out, and especially shameful when it is God's family—Principle III.: Bad members of the church to be put out—Excommunication a duty; secession a sin—Scripture proof—If the Church neglects this duty, no excuse for secession—Principle IV.: The clergy to be obeyed in things indifferent—Scripture proof—But Dissent based on disobeying them 184–201

CHAPTER XIII.

NONCONFORMITY CONTRARY TO THE PRINCIPLES AND PROFESSIONS OF NONCONFORMISTS.

The argument from Scripture already complete—Yet desirable to add a further consideration, viz., That Nonconformity is condemned by Nonconformists' principles. For, Principle I.: They allow the English Church to be a church—We only ask Nonconformists to leave their communions because not churches, as we are compelled to hold—Many so called "churches" only of late have assumed the name—The Methodist Society even now being transformed—Dissenters did not always recognise the English Church as a church. They do now—This change of front makes us hopeful of reunion—If a church, it is God's church—But if so, separation from it unjustifiable—If Dissenters do not *make*, they *maintain* a separation, as the very names they bear prove—Yet they ask us to join them, when we never left them, and cannot possibly join them all—Principle II.: Nonconformists allow that they and we agree in all essentials—Proof of this statement—Then why must they separate?—Principle III.: They hold that every church is more or less impure—Not excepting their own "churches"—Principle IV.: And that no church is exactly conformed to the primitive pattern.—Testimonies cited in proof—But they say the errors of the Church are such that they cannot remain—Does the Church impose sinful terms of communion?—If it did, it would be no church, and Nonconformists ought

PAGES

not to recognise it as a church—The Nonconformist dilemma —What are our conditions of membership?—They are not sinful—The Nonconformist not committed to errors and abuses on conforming—If so, could join no communion—Baxter's argument—Not committed to everything he hears at chapel—Not even preachers committed—Not even to their Trust Deeds —And what are our errors?—Nonconformists misunderstand us—As history shows—They now constantly do what they once denounced—Principle V.: That only a general apostasy justifies secession—The Church chargeable with no such apostasy 202–232

CHAPTER XIV.

NONCONFORMITY CONTRARY TO COMMON SENSE.

If Dissent were lawful, still inexpedient. Preliminary objections—1. The good work done by Nonconformists—2. Their conspicuous successes—Preliminary questions—Reasons alleged for secession—Reason 1. That the Church is no true Church—Alleged no longer—Reason 2. That its errors so deadly that men must leave it—But this policy of separation tried before—And always with disastrous results—It always provokes resistance—And so hinders reform—If it has done some good, it has done much more harm—And harm even to the seceders themselves—Reason 3. That men could serve God better elsewhere—But *their* freedom of action purchased at the expense of the community—Illustrated by the case of the Wesleyan Methodists—Results of that secession—Reason 4. That men get more good elsewhere—A plea disallowed by the first separatists—And the Christian has not only to think of his private profit—His gain must involve the Church's loss—Dr. Paton's appeal for Reunion—Results of partial Reunion in Australia—Concluding words 233–256

APPENDIX.

Extracts from a correspondence on Polychurchism . 257–268

ENGLISH NONCONFORMITY

AND

CHRIST'S CHRISTIANITY.

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTION.

"I thought once that all that talk against *schism* and *sects* did but vent their malice against the best Christians under these names; but since then . . . I have stood by while churches have been divided and subdivided, one congregation of the division labouring to make the other contemptible and odious, and this called *the preaching of truth* and *purer worshipping of God*."—Richard Baxter, *Cure of Church Divisions.*

"Something must be wrong somewhere, as the root of the religious divisions which distract the Church."—Binney, *Lights and Shadows of Church Life in Australia.*

"THE most remarkable and flagrant circumstance," says a Nonconformist writer,[1] "that fixes the attention of the Christian philosopher is *the inveterate and incurable sectarianism* which distinguishes our British Christianity. No people of any age or climate have carried the evil of religious faction and endless division to a more extraordinary height. No religious

[1] *Eclectic Review* for 1831, p. 192.

CHAP. I.

evil in the present day more resolutely defies correction than the evil of schism."

And if this was true—and it was true—of the English Christianity of sixty years ago, what shall we say of the religious dissension and division which run riot here in England at the present day? For it is precisely in the half century that has gone by since these words were penned that Dissent has made its greatest strides. There were divisions enough before that date, as everybody knows, but these sixty years constitute the age of subdivisions: Dissent has been succeeded by the "dissidence of Dissent." During that time, our sects or denominations have multiplied tenfold, and now the returns of the registrar-general exhibit a grand total of two hundred and sixty-four forms of Christianity in this country.

Yet the number of Christians, both of the National Church and of Nonconformist communions, who mourn over these same divisions, who feel themselves humiliated and compromised by them, who see in them, with Lord Bacon, a fruitful cause of atheism, and who are sorrowful witnesses of the acerbity and strife which they engender—witnesses too of the waste of energy, the sacrifice of moral and spiritual force which they entail,—the number of such Christians increases almost daily, and now those who are praying and labouring for reunion form an exceeding great army. The recent Grindelwald Conference is a plain proof that the question of reunion is now forcing itself upon the minds of many earnest and thoughtful men. The finger of GOD is thrusting it forward, and neither the indiscretions (and it may be intolerance) of some Churchmen, nor the traditions and vested interests of some Dissenters, will avail to keep it back.

CHAP. I.

But how is this "inveterate sectarianism" to be cured? how are the divisions of Christians to be healed?—*hic labor, hoc opus est.* I shall not attempt anything like a full answer to that question: I shall only offer one contribution towards it. I shall give reasons why Nonconformists should retrace their steps. Not, I am persuaded, by any compromises; not by what is called "sinking our minor differences;"[1] not by watering down our beliefs until there is nothing distinctive left; but by the "historical method;" by going back to first principles; by standing on the old paths; by showing that, however earnest and spiritual Nonconformity may have been, and whatever the work which Dissenters may have done, Nonconformity is nevertheless a mistake: by proving, as we can prove, that secession is not God's remedy for the abuses and errors of the Church, and that English Nonconformity in particular is entirely at variance with "Christ's Christianity"—it is thus, as I believe, that our many schisms must be healed.

But something must be said at the outset as to the form which my arguments will assume.

Readers of the Rev. Charles Leslie's "Short and Easy Method with the Deists," originally published in the year 1697, or of his "Short and Easy Method with the Jews," which appeared in the following year—treatises which enjoyed a wide popularity in the last century, and which may still be read with some degree of profit—will remember that the distinctive feature of these writings, which indeed have suggested this book, is that each essay, whilst eschew-

[1] "I am not one of those who talk in what I believe to be a very hollow cant about the sinking of minor differences. If the differences are minor, they ought never to have kept us apart. If they are real and great, they cannot be got rid of by talking of sinking them in this fashion."—Archbishop Magee, *Speeches and Addresses*, p. 277.

CHAP. I.

ing nice points of controversy and a bewildering discussion of details, fastens upon certain large and imperious and almost obvious considerations which must, when firmly grasped, carry conviction to the meanest understanding—to the meanest understanding, I should say, not warped by prejudice or interest. In other words, the merit of each treatise lies, not in its completeness, its research, its cumulative and exhaustive arguments, but in its brevity, its simplicity, its directness—in one word, in its neat and effective "way of putting things."

For example, in dealing with the Jews, the line he pursues is this—that they cannot use arguments against the truth of Christianity without striking so many blows at the credibility of their own Old Testament Scriptures, or (to put it in his own words), "If you can show the uncertainty . . . of Christianity, then *down comes your law along with it*, and we must all together turn Deists."

Now, it has appeared to me that a somewhat similar argument, one which, at any rate, should be free from ambiguity and avoid the *details* of controversy, and should rest on certain incontestable facts, and one, too, which shall address itself not only to scholars and theologians, but to those who occupy the room of the unlearned, may be used towards our Nonconformist fellow-Christians, who, notwithstanding their integrity, earnestness, and piety, have taken up what Churchmen must believe to be an indefensible and unscriptural and deplorable position with regard to the Church of CHRIST. I think, that is to say, that the argument in favour of Catholicity and against sectarianism may be put in as simple and forcible a light as that against the Deist or the Jew; in other words, that the ancient view of the Church and its constitution, the view which prevailed

almost universally down to the time of the Reformation, and which still holds sway over by far the larger part of Christendom, is capable of being presented at least *as* clearly and convincingly as is the argument for the Christian faith at large.

But whether I am right or wrong in my anticipations, such an attempt I shall make in the following chapters. I shall exhibit, with all possible brevity and simplicity, a line of argument from which I think that the candid Nonconformist will find it extremely difficult to escape. I do not believe that there is one weak link in the chain; but if there is, I have the satisfaction of knowing that it will be eagerly fastened on and remorselessly torn in pieces. For the titles which I have chosen for some of the following chapters of this book have at least one merit—that they must attract attention. They constitute, they are meant to constitute, a challenge to earnest and thoughtful Nonconformists to make good their position. I suggest to them, in all tenderness and humility, that it cannot be justified. If, therefore, my arguments are not answered, the reader may be quite sure that it is because they cannot be.

But the close connection of these chapters with Mr. Leslie's essays calls for one or two further remarks. I do not pretend (need I say it?) to have discovered "a short and easy method" of *winning Dissenters back* to the Church from which they or their forefathers have separated, for that is a consummation which is by no means dependent on the mere force of arguments. "Nothing," says Mr. Lecky, in his "History of Rationalism," "can be more certain than that the great majority, even of those who reason much about their opinions, have arrived at their conclusions by a process quite distinct from reasoning," and he goes on to speak of

CHAP. I.

"the extremely small influence of definite arguments in determining the opinions either of an individual or of a nation." But this is not all. To convince a man *against his will* is proverbially an impossible task; for he who undertakes it

> "tilts with a straw
> Against a champion cased in adamant;"

and Dissenters have to be convinced, if at all, very much against their wills. Interests, affections, prejudices, a score of things are concerned along with the understanding. An able Nonconformist has reminded us that "for a sect to abandon a name in honour of CHRIST and Catholicity is a thing unknown in the history of Christendom. Too many leaders," he proceeds to add, "and publishers depend for their prominence on the speciality, and the traditions of the party are honourably consecrated by time."[1] But the same reasons which lead *him* to despair of the absorption of a sect, may well keep *us* back from being too sanguine about the instantaneous conversion of the individuals of whom each sect is composed, or at least they may remind us that the intellect is only one factor in the complicated problem. A Nonconformist cannot claim his place in the ancient Church of the land without breaking with his own past; without a public confession of error; without seeming to cast a slur on his forefathers; without sundering many sacred ties which have united him to his co-religionists. I do not aspire, consequently, to formulate any method for

[1] Rev. Edward White, *Life in Christ*, p. 291. "We must remember that to reunite is a slow process. An atmosphere springs up around each body, very subtle but very powerful; it will be difficult to bring about anything on a large scale of reunion."—Dr. Maclaren, *British Weekly*, November 10, 1892.

the speedy conversion of Dissenters—nothing will ever accomplish *that*—though devotion and patience and tenderness and charity will go a long way towards it. Was not all Chablais, for example, won back to the Roman obedience by the apostolic life of St. Francis de Sales? My "methods"—for each chapter contains a complete argument—simply aim at proving—proving almost to demonstration—that Dissent, as we know it here in England, is distinctly forbidden in the Bible, and forbidden both by the example and the precept of our Lord and His Apostles.

But I do not embark on this undertaking with a light heart. I cannot conceal from myself that my arguments, however moderately stated, and though urged with sincere respect and affection, will be resented by many Dissenters. It is a deep distress to me that it should be so, but I know that it must be so. They will be resented because we all of us dislike everything which reflects, however remotely, on our judgment or attainments, and the more forcible and convincing it is, the more, as a rule, we dislike it. But I most earnestly and respectfully submit to our Nonconformist brethren (who shall not find, if I can help it, one word in this treatise to give them needless pain), I earnestly and affectionately submit to them that I am not to be accounted their enemy because I tell them the truth, or what I firmly believe to be the truth; nor am I to be blamed either for the desire to win Dissenters back to the Church, or for giving effect to that desire in every honest and legitimate way. I *should* be blamable if, honestly believing that English Nonconformity is contrary to Christianity, I did not have the courage of my convictions and say so. Even if I held it to be merely inexpedient and

CHAP I.

mischievous, I should still owe it to religion to proclaim my belief. And that Nonconformity *as such* is undesirable and deplorable must be allowed, for no one can pretend that division, especially in matters of religion, is *in itself* better than union; no man can seriously maintain that it is better for Christians to be separated, even in their views and sentiments, than to be united. There was a time, indeed, when competition was thought to be as salutary and necessary in ecclesiastical as in secular concerns, when it was seriously maintained that every town of any size ought to have "five or six different denominations *at least*." But that time is past and gone, and many Nonconformists are now as painfully alive to the evils of division as are Churchmen, and they are earnestly advocating certain measures of comprehension. "The Re-union movement," says the Canadian *Methodist Magazine*, "is of God." "The existence of so many sects"—these are the words of the English *Methodist Times*—"is itself a scandal and a calamity. . . . Wherever organic disunion is not inevitable, it is an ever-increasing curse." "The divisions of British Methodism"—I cull another extract from the same organ—"are becoming a public scandal. No one can justify them. . . . Here we are face to face with the sin and misery of England. The majority of the people are outside all Churches. Can any man in the name and presence of JESUS CHRIST justify the existence of half a dozen different Methodist Churches in our crowded land, above all in villages and small towns, where our divisions weaken us, paralyse us, and waste our resources of every kind."[1] It is true that their efforts and aspirations, as the sentence last

[1] October 6, 1892.

cited would prepare us to expect, are strictly limited to re-union amongst themselves—to the reconciliation, for example, of the different bodies of Methodists, to the fusion of Presbyterians, or to the comprehension of Congregationalists and Baptists;[1] but still they allow the *principle* that re-union is every way desirable. They can hardly be surprised, therefore, if Churchmen give to that principle a wider application than they do: if we argue that if re-union is desirable at all, then the re-union of all Christians is desirable. It must be remembered that partial re-union, good as it must be, still means actual and perpetuated division, and that so far as it is partial it leaves all the unhappy consequences of division untouched. I earnestly hope, therefore, that this humble effort to advance the comprehension of all CHRIST'S scattered sheep in one flock under one Shepherd will not provoke, as assuredly it does not merit, the lasting resentment of Nonconformists. So long as I "set down naught in malice," so long as I "speak the truth in love," I venture to think that I do them no wrong, even if I do directly and pointedly impugn their position.

And if it is said that the arguments of the book have a flavour of arrogance about them—and I seem to have observed that Nonconformists are particularly sensitive on this point, and constantly complain of superciliousness and patronising on the part of Churchmen when really nothing can be alleged to sustain the charge; if it is objected that the very suggestion that Nonconformity is in any way con-

[1] "Why should there be three Presbyterian Churches in Scotland, with the same creed, confessions of faith, and ecclesiastical constitution? why half-a-dozen Methodist bodies in England, of whom substantially the same may be said?" —Dr. Maclaren, *loc. cit.*, p. 6.

CHAP. I.

trary to Christianity is offensive, then I submit that the proper way, and indeed the only way, to prove any offence is to disprove the argument. The argument contained in the following pages is either valid or it is invalid. If it is invalid, if it will not hold water, then let its weakness be exposed. If it is valid, it is of no use to cry out against its consequences. Churchmen have often had to complain that Nonconformist members of CHRIST, instead of addressing themselves to refute the reasoning respectfully put before them, profess that such reasoning is in itself an insult to them. Mr. Gladstone has pointed out that it is no reply to the Churchman's argument to cry out that it "unchurches" Dissenting communions. He reminds us that when the Puritans "contended against the Prelatical constitution of the Church of England by arguing that the entire constitution of the Church was defined in the Word of GOD, and that that constitution was exclusively Presbyterian," this allegation "was met, not by complaints of its 'unchurching' the Church of England, but by an examination of its matter and foundation." Similarly, we may surely ask of Nonconformists, that instead of protesting that they are insulted when we venture to question the lawfulness and Scripturalness of their position, they should set themselves to demolish the argument. If their position is demonstrably conformable to Christianity, then I owe them a humble apology, which I shall not be slow to make, for having presumed to maintain the contrary. If, on the other hand, it is not in conformity with the teaching of our religion, then, however great the pain of the discovery must be, still they owe us thanks for having forced this fact on their attention. *Amicus Plato, amicus Socrates, sed magis amica veritas.*

Church Principles, p. 403.

CHAP. I.

But I must refer for one moment to the titles of the later chapters—chapters which claim to furnish so many "short and easy methods" with Dissenters. It may be asked why, when I was conscious beforehand that they would, in the nature of things, awaken some resentment in the bosoms of the very men whom it is my business and my sacred duty to conciliate (if I can), why I must needs choose such aggressive designations. My answer is that I think it far better that Nonconformists should quarrel with the book, and, if it must be so, denounce the writer, than that they should ignore or affect to disdain the argument. I have deliberately chosen these titles in the hope of arresting their attention. For everybody at all acquainted with the history of controversy knows that it is the hardest thing in the world to gain a hearing except from the side which agrees with you already. It is only one Christian out of a hundred that will read both sides of a question; most of them, like King Charles, seem to think that "one side is quite enough for an honest man;" all that the ninety and nine desire is to be confirmed in their preconceived opinions. Nor is this to be wondered at, for

> "The search for truth is not one half so pleasant
> As sticking to the views we hold at present."

What religion has most suffered from and now has most to dread is not heresy, but that *vis inertiæ* which gives to heresies their hold and permanence. "Ce n'est pas l'erreur," it has been finely said, "qui s'oppose aux progrès de la vérité. Ce sont la mollesse, l'entêtement, l'esprit de routine, tout ce qui porte à l'inaction." The shameful divisions of Christendom are perpetuated year after year, just because Nonconformists and Churchmen alike read

CHAP. I.

only their own books and listen only to their own orators. It is for this reason that I take up what *looks like*—though GOD knows it is not meant to be anything of the kind—an attitude of menace and defiance. I am prepared to hear it so described. I may possibly be accused of "attacking Dissenters." But my answer is that it is no attack, it is an act of charity and brotherly love, if you believe a fellow-Christian to be mistaken, to tell him so plainly, and at the same time to produce your reasons—provided, of course, that you do this kindly and patiently and respectfully; which is precisely what in this volume I shall scrupulously endeavour to do.

CHAPTER II.

NONCONFORMITY AND NONCONFORMITY—DISSENT AND DISSENT.

"I do not meddle at all in these questions, whether there be corruptions and faults in our Church condemned by God's Word; whether they be many or few; whether they be small or great, but only thus far—whether they be such or so great as to make our Churches anti-Christian."—*A Second Treatise against the Donatists of England.* Preface. By the "Nonconformist" Giffard of Maldon.

"It is noted by one of the fathers, Christ's coat indeed had no seam, but the Church's vesture was of divers colours; whereupon he saith, *In veste varietas sit, scissura non sit.*"—Bacon, *Essays. Of Unity in Religion.*

IF Christianity means, and assuredly it does mean, the imitation of our LORD JESUS CHRIST; if it involves the following of His example, the faithful observance of His commands, then, unless I greatly deceive myself, I shall have no difficulty in proving, and in proving to demonstration, that English Nonconformity, that the Dissent which prevails so largely in this country, in our colonies, and in America, is contrary to CHRIST'S Christianity. I undertake to show that it is contrary to the *example* of CHRIST; contrary to the *precept* of CHRIST; contrary to the *prayer* of CHRIST.

And I anticipate as little difficulty in proving to the candid and unprejudiced reader that this same Nonconformity is also opposed to the Christianity of the Apostles. I do not mean, of course, that the Apostles' conception of Christianity differs in jot or

CHAP. II.

tittle from "CHRIST'S Christianity." I only appeal to their action and to their teaching to show what His Christianity really is and forbids and requires. For no doubt it will be said by some—it will be said by Nonconformists as a class—that we have misunderstood the mind and will of CHRIST; it will be alleged that we have misread His example, misconceived His prayer, misinterpreted His precepts. We appeal to the Apostles, consequently, to show that this is not the case; to show that CHRIST'S Christianity, as they understood it, makes no provision and leaves no room for Dissent. I shall prove, and prove to demonstration, that Dissent is contrary to the *example* of the Apostles, contrary to their *precepts*, contrary to their *principles*.

But what do we mean by "Nonconformity," and what do we mean by "Dissent"? Let us carefully define our terms, and the more so as each of these words has two meanings.

By "Nonconformity," then, I do *not* mean disagreement with, or disapproval of, any of the doctrines or practices of the Church. It is necessary to say this, because this is the original and proper meaning of the word. The first "Nonconformists," it is matter of history, were persons who disapproved of certain features in the Church's regimen, but did not on that account separate from its communion. At the very first, indeed, their nonconformity was confined to one point, to the vestments worn by the bishops. Fuller[1] distinguishes between three classes of Nonconformists, the earlier, the middle, and the later, but none of these were seceders from the Church. In fact, it was the mark of a "Nonconformist" that he did

[1] *Church History of Britain*, vol. iv. p. 72.

not secede. He assumed this name because whilst he conformed—to use his own phrase—to the *essence* of the Church, he did not conform to some of its *accidents*. "Until quite a recent date the term Nonconformists did not mean those who could not conform to the National Church, but those who could not conform to certain forms used in that Church. From Elizabeth to Charles II., from Thomas Cartwright to Richard Baxter, the English Nonconformists, without one exception, always vehemently insisted that they were members, and even the best members, of the National Church, and that their membership was at the ground of their conformity. Those who now call themselves 'Nonconformists,' the Independents, Baptists, &c., were always called by the Nonconformists 'Separatists' or 'Dissenters.'"[1]

It may be well if I cite here some few testimonies in proof of these assertions, though they can only be necessary for those who are unfamiliar with the religious history of those times. They will at least show how very little modern Nonconformists have in common with those whose name they have somehow inherited (though they have repudiated their opinions), and whose descendants they often claim to be. I begin with Cartwright. "When Brown and Harrison openly declared for separation,

[1] Rev. Thomas Hancock in the *Pall Mall Gazette*. See also the *Church Quarterly Review*, January 1891, pp. 387-397. Mr Hancock instances, as one proof of this position, the title of the Baptist John Canne's treatise, *The Necessity of Separation from the Church of England proved by the Nonconformists' Principles*. It may be added that the Baptists "at first held their opinion without separating for it. . . . . Mr. Tombes, who continued an Antipædobaptist to his dying day, yet, as I am told, wrote against separation from it and for communion with the parish churches."—Wall, *Infant Baptism*, vol. i. p. 679 (Ed. Cotton).

CHAP. II.

T. C. himself undertook to answer them."[1] Similarly, "H. Jacob, the old Nonconformist, answered Johnson the separatist."[2] "As for those of the separation," wrote Parker, a noted Nonconformist, "who have confuted them more than we? who have written more against them?" It was the Nonconformist Giffard, again, that answered Barrowe and Greenwood; see his *Short Treatise against the Donatists*. In his *Tryall of Separation* and *Answer to Two Treatises, &c.* (issued in 1642; Ball died in 1640), the Nonconformist Ball discusses the question "whether, by the Scripture and principles of the Nonconformists, separation from the Church of England be necessary and lawful," and answers it with a decided negative. "The separation being now begun," writes Stillingfleet (p. 27), "the Nonconformists *set themselves against it* with the greatest vehemence." But it is in Baxter's writings that we find perhaps the clearest assertion of the resolute adherence of the old Nonconformists to the Church. "The most sober and learned Nonconformists of former times," he writes in one place, "notwithstanding their scruples on some points, yet utterly condemned separation from our churches as sinful;" and again, "The Nonconformists in England . . . wrote more against separation by far than the Bishops did, as is yet visible in their books, specially Cartwright, Hildersham, Bradshaw, Paget, Giffard, Brightman, Bayne, Rathband, John Ball, &c.," and he adds, "Those then counted the Fathers of Independency were of the same mind, for parish communion and against separation, Mr. Jacob Bradshaw, Ames, &c." And once more—and this was twenty years after the Act of Uniformity—"The

On the Cross, Pt. 2, cap. 9.

Published 1591.

[1] Stillingfleet, *Unreasonableness of Separation* (published in 1683), p. 28.

[2] *Ibid.* p. 7.

Nonconformists prefer to take their assemblies but as *chapels*, and not as distinct, much less as separated *churches*. And those of them who do administer the sacrament, and do that which is *like the separatists' way*, yet do it not on their principles, but *pro tempore*, till God shall give them opportunity to serve Him in the established way." It is quite clear, therefore, that English "Nonconformity," in its origin, was entirely at variance with our present-day Dissent. The Nonconformists of the seventeenth century protested but did not secede.

Now, against Nonconformity in this sense of the word, I have nothing to say, and such Nonconformists are even now found in the Church. I am myself a Nonconformist in some few particulars. I dissent, for example, as Bishop Thirlwall did, and as many more have done, from the public recitation of the Athanasian Creed as a part of divine service, though I submit to the rule of the Church; I recite this Creed until it shall be otherwise ordered by lawful authority. I dissent, again, from the present paralysis of discipline in the Church. I dissent from all encroachments of the State upon the Church's province. I dissent from some parts of our complex system of patronage, &c. I could hardly contend, therefore, that all such Nonconformity was anti-Christian. The Nonconformity which I do pronounce, and which I engage to prove, anti-Christian is that policy and practice of *separation* to which alone the name of Nonconformity is given at the present day. It is of SECESSION that I shall speak, and of secession only: of separation from the body of Christians forming the Church of this or any country, and of adhesion to some sectarian organisation. I maintain that separation, at least from the Church of this country,

CHAP. II.

is contrary to Christianity. I do not think it necessary to debate the question whether *under any circumstances* secession can be justified: I have my own opinions on the point, and they may possibly leak out, but there is no need to obtrude them here. If my argument is to be anything like Leslie's "Short and Easy Method," then we must rigidly keep to the point; we must sternly decline to be tempted into digressions. And the point I engage to prove is, not that Nonconformity is always and everywhere unchristian, but that *English* Nonconformity, the Dissent which has sprung up in this land of ours since the Reformation, that *this* is distinctly contrary both to the example and to the precept of our LORD CHRIST and to the actions and instructions of His holy Apostles.

But I hope it is unnecessary to say, and yet (so fertile are discussions like these in misconceptions) it had better be said, that by the words "Nonconformity contrary to Christianity" I do not mean that *all* the ideas and practices of Nonconformists are unchristian; I do not suggest that there is *anything* unchristian about Nonconformists except their separation. I am only concerned here with one feature of their religious life, and that is their Nonconformity: as to the rest, I pronounce no opinion —except this, to say that there are and have been Nonconformists whose shoe's latchet I am unworthy to unloose, and that if there are Churchmen who think their fervour, their zeal for souls, their endeavours after holiness, yes, and the great bulk of their doctrines, if there are those who pronounce *these* unchristian (I have never met with such persons), at any rate I am not of the number. I recognise all baptized Nonconformists as my brothers

in Christ; I recognise all earnest and devout Nonconformists as my examples in Christianity; the only thing which I venture in these pages to condemn is the very thing on which they so often pride themselves, their Nonconformity. I affirm that *this* is anti-Christian; and I go no farther.

Similarly, I think it well to observe that the only Dissent with which this book undertakes to deal is that which is spelled with a capital letter; about mere "dissent" it will say nothing. It will not treat, that is to say, of any disagreement with these or those views, or of any disapproval of these or those practices, either on the part of Churchmen or Nonconformists; it will deal exclusively with *divisions* in the body corporate of CHRIST.[1]

It will hardly be contended that the words "dissent" and "Dissent" represent a distinction without a difference. It may be that these words do not differ so much as *homoousion* and *homoiousion;* but it is also true that these latter words, which once divided Christendom into two hostile camps (albeit there is only the difference of an iota between them), do not yield more divergent meanings than "dissent" with a cursive and "Dissent" with a capital letter. For the former merely implies difference of *opinion*, whilst the latter implies an overt *act of secession*. The latter means open rebellion against the estab-

[1] As it may seem to some that any treatise on Dissent which entirely overlooks the grounds on which it is based must necessarily be futile, I may perhaps be permitted to say that I have dealt with those grounds—the alleged doctrinal errors and practical abuses of the Church—at some length already, in a volume entitled *Church or Chapel?—an Eirenicon*. London. Wells Gardner, Darton, & Co., 3rd edition. The book aims at showing that Dissenters condemn Church doctrines because they misunderstand them.

CHAP. II.

lished form of government, whereas the former involves no more than dissatisfaction with, and possibly opposition to, some of the things said or done by those who for the time being are in power.

There are in almost all communities, both religious and secular, some persons who "dissent" from some of the ideas or teachings or requirements or proceedings of the community, but who have not felt constrained on that account to become Dissenters, that is to say, separatists, from it. In other words, there may be and often is much "dissent" without any idea of "Dissent" whatsoever.

In the same way there may be and often is Dissent, *i.e.*, secession, without any basis or suspicion of dissent. Thousands of Dissenters in this country have no quarrel with the doctrines or usages of the English Church; in many cases they have not the least idea what these doctrines and usages really are. I question if there is a clergyman in the land who has not been told again and again by some of his Nonconformist parishioners that they have nothing whatever against the Church, only they prefer the Chapel, or that they hold with the Church, and always come to it for baptisms and burials, but that they are more accustomed to the Chapel. They are "Dissenters," in fact, without being in the least degree "dissenters" from its teachings.

But more than this—dissent is inevitable, whilst Dissent is nothing of the kind. The former there must be in the nature of things, whilst the latter, as I shall hope to prove, there need not be, and ought not to be. Holy Scripture requires us repeatedly to dissent, under certain circumstances. But the same Scripture, unless I have entirely misread it, as distinctly forbids all Dissent, or, let

me rather say, all such Dissent as exists in England. The former may be a sacred and imperative duty, but in no case can the latter be advocated as its lawful, much less inevitable, remedy.

For example, if "doctrines of dæmons" were taught in the Church of the present day, and we know such doctrines have been or will be taught at some period in the history of the Church, then it must be the duty of those who recognise the true character of such teachings, a duty which they owe to GOD, to the Church, to their neighbours and to themselves, to "dissent" from such doctrines and to protest against them.[1] On this point, there cannot surely be two opinions. 1 Tim. iv. 1.

But it does not follow, because I or others feel and express the most energetic and uncompromising dissent from these views, or any views, it does not follow that I am doing the wise and Christian and necessary thing to let my dissent harden into Dissent; to carry my dissatisfaction to the length of separation. "It is not all one," says Chillingworth, "to forsake the errors of the Church, and simply to forsake the Church; no more than it is for me to renounce my brother's or my friend's vices or errors, and to renounce my brother or my friend."[2]

[1] "In all churches there are things felt by some to be erroneous or wrong. Without deeming it necessary in any given case to *separate*, such persons not only *may* speak, but, *if the things be serious*, they *ought* to speak."—Binney, *Lights and Shadows*, p. xlviii.

[2] "You know they separate from your congregations as no churches, from the ordinances dispensed by you as mere anti-Christian, and from yourselves as no visible Christians. But we profess unfeignedly we separate from the corruptions which we conceive to be left in your churches, and from such ordinances administered therein as we feared are not of God, but of man."—*Letter of many Ministers in Old England to some in New England.* London, 1643.

CHAP. II.

That is an entirely different question, and every intelligent Christian knows that it is a different question. He can hardly fail to see that, the duty of dissent being admitted, the duty and the necessity and the expediency and the lawfulness of creating a division in the Church of Christ still remain so many open questions. In fact, there are few Nonconformists who will not admit that Christians have constantly separated from Christians on wholly insufficient grounds. In other words, they admit that there may be and has been dissent which furnishes no sort of justification for Dissent. If it were otherwise, every trifling difference of opinion would compel a new secession, would authorise a breach, with all the humiliating and disastrous consequences of a breach, in the body of Christ.

But no more need be said to prove that "dissent," which merely means disagreement with and repudiation of certain ways and ideas, and "Dissent," which means separation from a National Church and combination into a private communion and fellowship, are entirely different things. Indeed, I owe an apology to the intelligent reader for dwelling so long on a point which will seem to him to be obvious and indisputable. But I have thought it necessary to emphasise this distinction because upon it my argument turns. For the contention to which this volume will be devoted is simply this, that whilst dissent may be necessary, may be praiseworthy, may be a sacred and imperative duty, secession never has been, nor can it be, under any circumstances which are at all likely to arise in England, permissible to the Christian. Nonconformists may tell us that they object to this feature or to that in the constitution, teaching, or ordering of the Church, or that they do not agree with this doctrine or that

ritual. My answer is, that I am not now concerned to defend this feature or that; that they are welcome to retain their views, if they must retain them, but that they have done wrong to make these views, whatever they may be, a ground of separation.[1] My answer is, that, be their objections what they may, and be their views what they may, they have done an unchristian thing when they left the ancient and historic Church and set up new and Nonconformist "churches" by its side.

And it is just because the Dissenters of to-day, let me say in conclusion, practically ignore this distinction, because they assume that dissent almost necessarily involves Dissent,[2] that I venture to think of any "short and easy method" of dealing with them.[3] There is no short and easy method of disposing of all their objections; it would be an affront to their understanding and to that of Churchmen to suppose that there was. If there had been, it would hardly have remained for me to discover it. But it is no

[1] "The Nonconformists divide and subdivide themselves into sects and fragments of sects, in the resolve to have no religious connection with those who are not in absolute doctrinal accord with themselves."—Mr. P. V. Smith, *Guardian*, October 1, 1890. "We cannot pay too much attention to doctrine or too earnestly contend for the faith; we cannot too anxiously seek to have and to disseminate clear views of truth; but if we make our clear views a reason for quarrelling with other Christians and a bar to our fellowship with them, we forget that CHRIST is more than doctrine and charity better than knowledge."—Dr. Dods, *I. Corinthians*, p. 41.

[2] As an example of the way in which it is almost uniformly *assumed* that divergence of views must necessitate a plurality of "Churches," I may cite a statement of Dr. Moulton (Wesleyan). "I for one believe that differences must exist, and that it is the will of God that there should be many communities of Christians." Reported in *The Church in the West*, February 28, 1891.

[3] This is the "one false notion" from which I conceive their "fatal false reasoning" to proceed.

CHAP. II.

reflection on their intelligence to suggest that they have come by degrees, in the preoccupation of controversy on disputed points, to overlook the fact that "no doctrinal error which does not subvert personal faith in CHRIST should be allowed to separate Churches" or Christians.[1] This argument only claims to be "short and easy" inasmuch as it shows that even if the errors and abuses of the Church are all that they are alleged by Nonconformists to be, still they are not such as to compel or to justify secession from a Church which GOD has not forsaken; that whilst the Head remains, the members must remain likewise.[2]

[1] Dr. Dods, *loc. cit.*

[2] It is constantly assumed by Nonconformists, and particularly by Wesleyans, that their forefathers were driven out of the Church. They often speak of them as having been "expelled" or "kicked out." But nothing of the kind has ever happened, or indeed can happen, if the Church is GOD'S Church, CHRIST'S Church, and such it is called. In that case it is obvious that man cannot eject members at pleasure. All that he can do, all that even a legal and formal sentence of excommunication can do, is to put men out of communion, out of benefits. See *Church or Chapel?—an Eirenicon*, pp. 75-77. That the Wesleyans were never thrust out of the Church is shown in *John Wesley, being Dead, yet Speaketh*, pp. 51-54.

CHAPTER III.

THE DEFINITION OF DISSENT—NONCONFORMIST CHURCHES UNKNOWN TO CHRIST'S APOSTLES.

"No Christian must be of a party or sect as such; that is, as dividing itself from the rest, causing schism or contention in the body, or making a rent unnecessarily in any particular church which is a part."—Baxter, *Reasons for the Christian Religion.*

"The church of a clique or coterie is not a Church of Christ."—Rev. J. R. Bailey, *President of Yorkshire Congregational Union*, 1892.

I HAVE already incidentally defined Dissent as the act or state of separation from the visible Church of CHRIST established in any country, and of adhesion to a private communion. Not that I propose to deal with Dissent in other lands than our own. No doubt, the positions which I shall lay down, if they can be proven, will apply almost equally to other lands; but I want it to be clearly understood that I have not other lands or other churches now in view. For the sake of simplicity and directness, and to avoid cumbering my argument with unnecessary details and distinctions, I address myself to *English* Dissenters only; and for these reasons I do not feel called upon to express any opinion as to which is the Church and which are the separatists in any other country than our own. An attempt has been made to turn my flank by requiring me to say which is the legitimate Church

CHAP. III.

in Germany,[1] and the demand was so confidently and pertinaciously urged, that I felt it expedient, in order to gain a hearing for my words, to turn aside for a moment and to furnish the information asked for. But having done this *once*, I decline to allow myself to be again diverted from the perfectly clear and intelligible argument of the following chapters into any confused and confusing side issues. I must first have this argument disposed of before I can consent to meet opponents on foreign fields of battle. The position here taken up, that Nonconformity, as we know it, as it exists in England, is unchristian, is either valid or invalid. If it is invalid, then let it be stormed and carried; in other words, let the flaws in my reasoning be exposed. But until this is done, I have nothing to say about the Church in Scotland or in Ireland or Switzerland. Whatever my arguments may be worth, I may at any rate ask that they shall be discussed on their own merits, not disposed of by a side wind. And the more so as the question in England is comparatively simple; elsewhere it is much more complicated. Why then should we insist on trying conclusions on the most, instead of the least precarious ground? "It is a trick with deceivers in dispute," says Baxter, "to prove *ab obscuriore*, and carry the controversy into a darker room and to fish in troubled waters." Why should we thresh out this question in the darker room, so long at least as we can have the broad light of day for our work elsewhere? For these reasons, I remain silent about other lands until the question of Dissent in England is first decided.

[1] By Dr. Beet, in a letter to the *Times* of September 20, 1892. The essential portions of this correspondence will be found in the Appendix, p. 257.

CHAP. III.

But to resume. I shall be told that this definition leaves much to be desired. "The visible Church of CHRIST established in any country!" "The visible Church once founded in England"—I shall be asked what I mean by these words.

I begin by remarking, that whatever may be our views as to an *invisible* Church, the "churches" of which we read in Holy Writ were visible churches. Whether there is such a thing as an "invisible Church" or not[1]—no such words are found in Holy Scripture—all Christians allow that there is, and always has been since the day of Pentecost, a visible church or churches. The church in Jerusalem, the church at Antioch, the "church of the Laodiceans," the "church in Sardis," all these were visible churches. That is to say, they were societies, communities, organised bodies of Christians; as visible and as organised as the Freemasons or the Foresters, as "the Church of England" or "the Wesleyan body." On this point there can be no dispute. Those who believe in an invisible church—and every instructed Christian knows that many belong to the *body* of the Church who are not of its *soul;* not of that secret number of true believers who are known to GOD alone—even they never dream of denying the existence or the necessity of visible churches; indeed, they all contend that their own communions are visible churches. Anyhow, without a visible church there can be no such thing as Dissent. If, therefore, there is an "invisible church," there is no need to discuss its nature here. All that my argument requires is the admission, which cannot be withheld, that from the first converts to Christianity were col-

Acts viii. 1. *ib.* xiii. 1. Col. iv. 16. Rev. iii. 1.

[1] This question is discussed at some length in *Church or Chapel?* chaps. v., vi.

CHAP. III.

lected into organised societies or communities called "churches."[1]

2. But, further, it will be admitted that the churches of which we read in the New Testament —to avoid disputation I omit all reference here to the church of the Old Covenant, "the church in the wilderness"—are always described by their *locality*, by their *geographical position*. We nowhere read of any church of Peter or Paul or Apollos; such an idea would have filled the writers of the New Testament with unmixed astonishment. Still less do we read of any "Baptist" or "Presbyterian" or "Episcopal" church—how could we, when every church in those days was both Baptist and Presbyterian and Episcopal?[2] No, we only read of "*the* church which was *in Jerusalem*," *the* church at *Antioch*, *the* church at *Cæsarea*, "*the* church which is *at Cenchrea*," "*the* church of GOD which is *at Corinth*," "*the* churches of *Galatia*," "the saints which are at *Ephesus*," "*the* church of the Laodiceans," "*the* seven churches of *Asia*," &c. There is no recognition, there is no mention, of any church, save the one church in this or that locality, or the one church throughout the world. If there is, let the passage be produced. But it cannot be produced. No church was known to the Apostles save *the* church of the city or country. Nor are the churches mentioned as assembling in private houses any exception to this rule. Such a congregation was still the church of that place.

Acts vii. 38.

Acts viii. 1. *ib.* xiii. 1. *ib.* xviii. 22. Rom. xvi. 1. 1 Cor. i. 2. 2 Cor. i. 1. 1 Cor. xvi. 1. Gal. i. 2. Ephes. i. 1. Col. iv. 16. Rev. i. 11.

Rom. xvi. 5. 1 Cor. xvi. 19. Col. iv. 15. Philem. ii.

[1] "They [the Apostles] gathered their converts into organised societies."—Dr. R. W. Dale, *Manual of Congregational Principles*, p. 13.

[2] "The churches of the Apostolic Age embraced every principle for which in later times each section of the Christian world has felt it necessary to contend, even to separation from the main body of the brethren."—Maurice, *Kingdom of Christ*.

CHAP. III.

But it may be well if we here turn aside for a moment to consider how these visible churches were constituted. There was a visible rite of admission to the church, the sacrament of baptism. There was no other way of joining the "one body," the "outward and visible community," than by the "outward rite of admission to it."[1] Those who were baptized were members of the church, and those only. No doubt a profession of belief in Christianity, or at least a desire for further instruction, preceded baptism; but it was not the profession which constituted men members, not even devotion to the Person of our LORD; it was CHRIST'S own sacrament that made them disciples. But every society must have officers as well as members, especially a teaching society like the Church. How, then, were the officers appointed? Again by a visible rite, by the laying on of hands. It was reserved for those in office to commission others. Nor can the church of any age or any place be otherwise constituted, either as to its officers or its members, than was the church of the first days. It is true these were only the outward and visible signs, but then we are speaking of the outward and visible church and of that alone.

St. Matt. xxviii. 19. St. John iv. 1. Acts ii. 38-41. viii. 12, &c. Acts vi. 6. xiii. 3; cf. xiv. 23. 1 Tim. iv. 14; v. 22.

3. The next thing to be observed is this—that the different congregations of Christians in a country or province are, on one occasion at least, described as constituting "the church" in that province. Thus, we read of "the church throughout all *Judæa and Galilee and Samaria*." Nor have we any reason to think that the country of Palestine was peculiar in this respect—why should it be? If the congregations there constituted one church, the congregations elsewhere would sooner or later do the same. It is

Acts ix. 31, R.V.

[1] See Dr. Beet on 1 Cor. xii. 13.

CHAP. III.

not pretended that any national churches were then fully organised: it *is* asserted that the principle of national churches is covered by these words. Besides, it was clearly impossible that the different Christian congregations of any country, all of which "continued steadfastly in the Apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread and the prayers," all of which were bound together by the closest and most sacred of bonds and were welded together by the fires of persecution, should stand aloof from each other or hold themselves independent of each other. With the example of the national church of the Jews constantly before them, and with apostles and prophets and brethren constantly passing from one congregation to another, it was obviously impossible that these "churches" should not gravitate into one "church," which, as a matter of fact, they speedily did. The Syrian church was but the first of many national churches.

Acts ii. 42.

Eph. iv. 4–6.

4. Now, whether these national churches, or, if you prefer it, these individual congregations, the "churches of Asia" and the "churches of Galatia," and the "church throughout all Judæa and Galilee and Samaria," together formed one church, "the holy church throughout all the world;" whether they constituted that "one body," that "church of the living God," about which so much is said to us in Holy Writ, it is not material to our present purpose to inquire. To me it seems a radical impossibility, especially in the light of Church history, to maintain the contrary: but if it is denied that all these "churches" together formed "the church," it does not affect my argument in the least degree. I am not required to prove that national churches make up the Catholic Church, though that is little more than saying that the universal church is the

See p. 185 below.

sum total of all the particular or provincial churches. No one, at any rate, can deny that the congregations of Palestine composed "the church" in Palestine, and this is enough for my purpose. Acts ix. 31.

But if, in the teeth of the Scripture just cited, it is denied, as it may be by some Congregationalists or Baptists, who hold to the *theory* of Independency, viz., that "by the will of Christ, every society of Christians organised for Christian worship . . . is a Christian church and is *independent of external control*"[1] (I may perhaps be allowed to say that this is only a *theory;* that it breaks down in practice, I have showed elsewhere);[2] if it be denied that the various Christian congregations of the Apostolic Age, the "churches" of which Holy Scripture speaks, unitedly formed, in their respective countries, "the church" of each country; if, that is to say, they repudiate altogether the idea of *national* churches,[3]

[1] Dr. Dale, *Manual*, p. 69.

[2] *Church or Chapel?* p. 60.

[3] "We read nothing in the New Testament of national churches."—Dr. E. R. Conder, *Why are we Dissenters?* These words could hardly have been penned if the writer had had the Revised Version of Acts ix. 30 before him. The conclusive argument against the Congregational idea is stated with great force by Stillingfleet in his *Unreasonableness of Separation*, pp. 227, 228. He shows that if our LORD or His Apostles had instituted Independent churches, the change to national communities could not possibly have been made without creating a great noise and evoking much protestation and opposition—opposition which must have left its mark on Church history. But there is no trace of anything of the kind; no church asserts its independency; no pastors refuse the rule of diocesan bishops. But indeed Congregationalism is being rapidly abandoned by Congregationalists. "The sturdiest Dissenter may ask himself whether this anarchist ideal, which he scoffs at in politics, is indeed meant to become the ground-plan of the city of God, or whether in the Church as in the State the Divine Spirit has not ordained some deeper and more enduring order, even as human nature itself cries out for some visible and permanent bond."—Rev. H. Darlow, *Nineteenth Century*, October 1890.

CHAP. III.

then I hasten to inform them that my argument does not presuppose the acceptance of any National Church theory. For if they deny that the Church of England as a whole is a scriptural church, they will not deny that the particular congregations which compose that Church, the congregations which for many hundreds of years have assembled in the various parishes of England for the ministry of the word and sacraments are scriptural churches. No doubt this *was* denied by some early separatists, who said that our parish churches were not "rightly gathered." Barrowe and Greenwood took this ground, as did Brown and Harrison and Ainsworth; but I do not think that many Dissenters hold this view now. I am fairly well acquainted with their literature, and I do not find that, eager as they are to denounce what they consider to be the abuses of our churches, they refuse to them the name of "churches." They would not affirm, for example, that there were no congregations of Christians at all in England before the Reformation, nor would they contend that the only churches of CHRIST found in the land since that date were to be found in the chapels of the various denominations. They think our parish churches very inferior, no doubt, in their constitution and privileges to their own congregations; still they allow that these imperfect churches *are* Christian churches, and were *once* the only churches in our towns and villages. And this is sufficient for my argument.

5. But I must now recur for a moment to the position taken up in the second paragraph. I have insisted on the fact that every church mentioned in Scripture is described as *the* church of the place, whether city or country. I may be asked why I do this. Because it follows from the very language

of inspiration that there was *only one church in one place;* that all the Christians of this or that city belonged to *the* church in this or that city.[1] There may have been more Christian congregations than one in Rome or in Corinth, but neither Rome nor Corinth, nor any city nor any country, knew anything of rival and competing—in one word, of Dissenting churches.[2] The only church at Corinth recognised in Holy Writ is "*the* church of God which is at Corinth," the church planted by St. Paul and watered by Apollos; the only church known in Palestine was "*the* church throughout all Judæa and Galilee and Samaria"—the society or societies which had "one LORD, one faith, one baptism;" the societies which "continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship;" the communities which acknowledged no Master but CHRIST, no foundation save that of "apostles and prophets, JESUS CHRIST Himself being the chief corner-stone." If there is any trace, however slight, of what is called "polychurchism," if there is one syllable to justify the modern phrase of "the churches" (the "News of the Churches," the

1 Cor. iii. 6.

St. Matt. xxiii. 8.

Ephes. ii. 20.

See note, p. 38.

[1] "The word *church* denotes usually the company of the professed servants of Christ living in one city."—Beet, *Ephesians*, p. 386.

[2] "It is possible at first there might be no more Christians in one city than could meet in one assembly for worship; but where doth it appear that when they multiplied into more congregations, they did make new and distinct churches under new officers with a separate power of government?"—Stillingfleet, *Unreasonableness of Separation*, p. 227. He proceeds to show that the 5000 Christians of Jerusalem could not possibly form one *congregation*, yet they formed one church. See this admitted by Dr. Binney, p. 214 below. Compare Wesley, Sermon lxxiv., "Of the Church." Dr. Dale, indeed (*Manual*, pp. 77–83), argues otherwise, but I do not think his words will carry conviction, even to Congregationalists. Dr. Davidson (*Congregational Lecture*, 1848) agrees with Dr. Binney.

Acts iv. 4; viii. 1.

CHAP. III.

"Review of the Churches," &c., &c.), as applied to the various separatist bodies and denominations, again we say, let it be produced. But no such trace, no such syllable, can anywhere be found. Such language is just as foreign to all Apostolic usage as it would be to speak of "the Christs," or "the Lords," or "the Ways," or "the faiths."[1]

1 Cor. i. 13. Eph. iv. 5. Acts ix. 2; xix. 23. R.V. Jude 3.

We see, then, that the only visible church known to inspiration was the whole company of professed Christians, whether in a house, a city, a country, or possibly throughout the world. According to the ideas of inspired writers, instead of two hundred and sixty-four churches of CHRIST in England—be the same more or less—instead of a "Baptist Church," and a "Wesleyan Church," and a "Presbyterian Church," and a "Reformed Episcopal Church," and a "Teetotal Church," and a "New Jerusalem Church," there should be one church in each village, *the* church of the village, and one church in the land, "*the* church throughout all England."

If I do not now allege any other proof of this position than the language in which the church is uniformly described in the Sacred Word, it is because such proof will come before us later on. Here it must suffice to say, that *Nonconformist churches are absolutely unknown to Scripture.* That everywhere tells of one church—*the* church—in this or that place. If this is not so, nothing can be easier than to prove the contrary.

And such a church, and such churches, it is admitted, there once were here in England. When

[1] It is sometimes pleaded by Nonconformists—it is by Dr. Conder—that they "are not shut up to any one church," that they "have liberty of choice." That is precisely what we say is unscriptural. The early Christians had *no* choice. They knew of no church but one.

and by whom they were founded, it does not concern us at the present moment to inquire. That there was such a church, the aggregate of so many parish churches, it is enough for us to know. It would only distract attention from the point really at issue were we to discuss the relations of the ancient British Church to the mission under St. Augustine. The one fact which it concerns us to remember is that for many centuries there was but one church in the land—the *Ecclesia Anglicana*, as it is called in the Great Charter of Henry III. (A.D. 1224)—*the* church of CHRIST in England. No doubt that church was more or less tainted with error and corruption—no church is or has been, or ever can be, wholly free from error or absolutely clear of all corruption: how can it be when its members are men, with all the frailties and failings of men? No doubt this English Church for many long years was under the domination of a foreign prelate; no doubt the Bishop of Rome, by means of his "false decretals," laid upon our fathers a yoke which neither we nor they were able to bear; but neither the usurpations of the Pope, nor the protesting submission of the English Church to the Pope, alters the fact that there was a visible church of CHRIST in this land, and that this church was one.[1] From the Norman Conquest at the very latest, down to the time of the Reformation at the earliest, the church throughout all England was "one body." And the parish churches had no com-

Gladstone, *Church Principles*, p. 308.

[1] "It is a fundamental principle of the Church of England—see title-page of Prayer Book—that there is only one Church of CHRIST, though it has many branches."—Whitehead, *Church Law*, p. 66. Wesley (Sermon lxxiv.) defines the Church of England thus:—"Those members of the universal Church who are inhabitants of England . . . that body of men in England in whom is one Spirit, one hope of their calling, who have one baptism, and one GOD and Father."

CHAP. III.

petitors; they were, like those of the first days, *the* churches of the localities.

And this is the church, or, if you prefer, these are the congregations, from which I say it has been, and is still, a sin to separate. I am prepared to prove that from such a church nothing could justify secession—and that because it was "*the* church of the living GOD" in this land. My contention is that so long as GOD has not left it, *man* may not leave it.[1] I do not find that GOD had left the church of Corinth, notwithstanding its many abuses; on the

[1] I had no idea, when I first used these words, that I had been anticipated in this view by the older Nonconformists. For example, the author of the *Second Answer for Communicating*, &c., says, "Unless I hold the congregation whereof I am now disannulled and *become no Church of Christ*, I cannot voluntarily absent myself from their assemblies." So the authors of the *Grave and Modest Confutation* argue that the Church of England being a true Church of CHRIST, wilful separation from it means separation from CHRIST. So again Ball, in his *Answer to Two Treatises*, &c., p. 103. "So long as we acknowledge the Church to be true (whatsoever her sins are), a separation from all communion with it is utterly unlawful." "Can you prove," asks Baxter, "that CHRIST doth separate from all the Christians that you separate from, or that they have no visible communion with Him, or that He taketh them for no churches, and disowneth the administration of all the ministers in the world whom you disown, or yet that it is safe to separate where CHRIST doth not separate?" &c. (*Cure of Church Divisions*, p. 226). In fact, the early Separatists always took the ground that our churches were *not true churches*, and that therefore it was a duty to leave them. See, for example, the Brownists' *Apology to King James* by Ainsworth and others, Arts. 29, 30, 31, 32, 39 (cited below, p. 44). They never thought it lawful to separate from any church that was a true church. The Westminster Assembly refused the request of the Independents that they might gather churches, "because it is not lawful to gather churches out of true churches." The Assembly distinctly held that the holding of separate congregations for worship when there was agreement in doctrine and in the substantials of religion was unlawful and schismatical. The Presbyterians asked the Brownists, "If they allowed our churches to be true churches, what necessity there was for any separation?"—Stillingfleet, p. 62.

contrary, I find that it was still "*the* church of GOD . . . in Corinth." I do not find that He had left the church in Sardis, notwithstanding that it was "dead," and had but a few names which "did not defile their garments," and I fail to see, therefore, on what grounds it can be alleged that He has left this ancient Church of England, either now, or at any previous period of her history. But let this pass; this question will come before us later on. The point we have reached is this—that there was once an English Church, or, in deference to the Congregationalist, let me say, there were once hundreds of churches in England, which, just like the churches described in Holy Scripture, embraced all the baptized, all the professed Christians in England. That it is a sin to separate from this Church or these churches, or from the communities which represent them at the present time, of course still remains to be proved.[1]

1 Cor. iii. 3; v. 1, 2, 11; vi. 9, 15, &c. 1 Cor. i. 2 2 Cor. i. 1. Rev. iii. 1, 4

But, at the risk of what may seem to some needless repetition, I must be allowed to remark that "dissent" from this Church, that dissatisfaction with some of its doctrines and institutions and accretions, was not only permissible and lawful, but it was absolutely necessary. For, to mention two or three abuses out of many, this English Church had been led, in common with the major part of Christendom, to mutilate one of the Sacraments of our Lord—from the eleventh century onwards it denied the "cup of blessing" to the laity; moreover, its worship,

[1] It may be alleged—indeed it is alleged—that though there was undoubtedly no Nonconformity in the Apostles' days, Nonconformity is necessary now because of the errors and abuses which have arisen since their times. This statement is discussed below, pp. 162–4. Of course the presumption is that if there was no Nonconformity then, there should be none now. The presumption must always be in favour of unity.

CHAP. III.

its prayers and praises, were offered in a tongue not understanded of the people; it practically denied its children access to the Holy Scriptures; it had overlaid the everlasting Gospel with its legends and traditions; and lastly, it had bowed its neck to the yoke of an aggressive and intrusive prelate, whose claim to authority in England could only be supported by wholesale fabrications. Against these things it was a solemn duty to protest. Men owed it to GOD and to religion to dissent from such teachings. And from some of these our forefathers did dissent. Whilst it never occurred to them to separate from the Church of England, they protested again and again against the exactions and encroachments of the Roman pontiff. But the consideration of this question, of both the dissent and the Dissent which from time to time have arisen in England, may perhaps be more conveniently reserved for a separate chapter.

Note.—"We may challenge the proof from Scripture of any plurality of Churches, except such as is local only."—Gladstone, *Church Principles*, p. 112.

CHAPTER IV.

THE RISE AND PROGRESS OF DISSENT IN ENGLAND.

"Nothing provokes God more than to divide His Church; nay, the blood of martyrdom will not wash off the guilt of it. The mischief the Church receives by it is greater than it receives from open enemies, for the one makes it more glorious, the other exposes it to shame amongst its enemies, when it is set upon by its own children."—*Chrysostom in Eph.* iv., p. 822.

"Church division is a heap of sins."—Baxter, *Cure of Church Divisions*, Preface.

WE have observed in the preceding chapter that Nonconformist churches were unknown in the age of the Apostles. If this is not so, if Nonconformity was then the duty and the privilege which it is supposed to be now, it should not be difficult to give the names and dates and principles of the early Dissenting communions. For of one thing we may be certain—that no such communions could exist without leaving distinct traces behind them in the pages of Scripture. If there were secessions in those days from *the* Church, the Apostles and historians could not have failed to have noticed them. But they are not noticed; there is no reference to anything of the kind. Nothing of the kind can therefore have existed.

It is not denied that there were parties, or the germs of parties, within the Church. We know that there were such, and we also know that they were sternly denounced and repressed. It is not denied, again, that there was impatience of, and indeed revolt 1 Cor. i. 12–16.

CHAP. IV.

against, apostolic authority—we know that some even "preached CHRIST of envy and strife," thinking to raise up affliction for St. Paul in his bonds. But we have no evidence of the existence of any separatist bodies, and if we had, it would not afford the slightest countenance or support to Nonconformity, unless it could be shown that these separatist bodies of Christians enjoyed the favour and approval of the Apostles.

Phil. i. 15-18. Cf. 2 Tim. i. 15.

Moreover, certain as it is that Nonconformist churches were unknown to the Apostolic age, it is equally certain that, in this country at least, they were unknown in any age anterior to the Reformation. It is not only that they were unheard of in the first century: in England they were unheard of in the first fifteen centuries of our religion. I do not suppose that this statement will be questioned; it will certainly not be questioned by those who are familiar with the ecclesiastical history of our country. If, however, it is maintained that during this period there were more churches than one in the land, no doubt those who say this will be able to tell us when and where these new communions came into being. Everybody knows how easy it is to give the exact date of, and all particulars about, the new denominations which have arisen since the Reformation. It ought to be equally easy to furnish particulars of the Nonconformist "churches" which existed before the fifteenth century, if such there were. But no such particulars can be given; no such new-made churches are known to history. Separation from *the* Church was a thing unheard of.

It is not implied by this statement, however, that there was no "dissent" within the Church. On the contrary, it is matter of history that there was. All through these centuries, when secession was

unknown, the murmurs of disapproval and rebellion were loud and deep. It is true that they were chiefly directed against the encroachments and exactions of the Papacy—as our statute-book bears frequent witness—but it is also true that not a few of our forefathers "dissented" from some of the doctrines of the pre-Reformation Church. It may suffice to mention here the case of Wyclif and his followers, the Lollards, who, among other things, repudiated transubstantiation, the compulsory celibacy of the clergy, the worship of images, and compulsory auricular confession. But neither for the one reason nor the other, neither because of the ecclesiastical nor yet because of the doctrinal abuses, did men separate from the Church. Wild as were some of the teachings of the Lollards, the idea of secession does not appear to have entered into their minds. On the contrary, they petitioned Parliament (in A.D. 1395) for aid in *reforming the Church*. They were followed, about a century later, by those dissenters whom the *New Learning* or the revival of the study of the classic authors of Greece and Rome had inspired with ardent hopes for the reformation of religion, prominent amongst whom in this country were Erasmus and Dean Colet. The latter in particular inveighed against abuses in the Church, but none of these "Reformers before the Reformation" appear to have dreamed of separation. On the contrary, what men feared in those days was *excommunication;* they were very much afraid lest the Church should separate *them* from its communion. It is indisputable that during the pre-Reformation period, however much men might dislike the doctrines or government of the one religious communion established in the country, they did not become seceders. Nor was it that they *dared* not to divide the Church because of the pains

CHAP. IV.

and penalties that would follow; they had no desire so to do; they had no belief in the lawfulness or expediency of secession; their remedy was reformation from within.

And not only so, but so foreign was the idea of separation to the minds of that age, that even the Puritans, the most advanced of the Reformers, did not secede, and indeed severely blamed the Independents because they did.[1] The Puritans "dissented," and occasionally in very energetic terms, from some parts of the doctrine or discipline even of the reformed communion, but they did not forsake it. On the contrary, their idea was to Presbyterianise or Calvinise the Church by remaining in it and leavening it.[2] If the idea of separation ever presented itself, it is quite certain that it did not commend itself, and so we find them continuing in the Church's fellowship, sometimes in high places, until they were driven out of their *cures*—not out of the *Church*—in 1662. Bishops Hooper and Coverdale, Laurence Humphrey, Dean of Winchester, and John Foxe, the martyrologist, a Prebendary of Salisbury, are examples of many more. We have already observed that the early Nonconformists did not see in their Nonconformity any reason for Dissent. It is notorious that neither Cartwright nor Travers, nor any

See Neal, *Hist. of Puritans*, iii. 52; Gladstone, *State and Church*, ii. 129.

See above, pp. 15–17.

[1] "They make a vile schism, rending themselves from the Church of England, and condemning by their assertions the whole visible Church in the world, even as the Donatists did of old."—Giffard. "Their holding one Head and one faith doth not excuse them from being guilty of a breach of unity and downright schism, so long as they hold not one Body, one Baptism."—Newcomen, *Sermon at St. Paul's*, February 8, 1645. See also Rathband, *The Old Nonconformist's Doctrine against the Brownists.*

[2] "Of all sorts of enemies that our Church hath, there is none so deadly, so pernicious, and likely to prove so fatal, as the conforming Puritan."—South.

of their school, ever seceded. It was against dissenters within the Church that Hooker's immortal work was penned. They were nonconformist Churchmen who presented the Millenary petition, and who debated with the bishops at the Hampton Court and Savoy Conferences. All these "dissented" from one or more of the dogmas or requirements of the Church, but it does not seem to have occurred to them that these differences of opinion furnished any reason for Dissent; indeed, it is doubtful whether they held it possible for any man or any number of men to start a second "church" in England. Anyhow, for more than a century the Puritans dissented, but did not secede.

It was about the year 1568 that Nonconformity first hardened into separation. So far, varied and continuous as had been the expressions of dissent from some or other doctrines or usages of the English Church, there had been no Dissent—certainly none to speak of—in England. But after this year this could be said no longer. By that date, the example of Holland, Germany, and other Protestant countries had apparently accustomed the minds of some of our countrymen to the idea of a secession and sectarian body, a church other than *the* church of the realm or province. They had come to think that churches could be founded and fashioned by art and man's device, and in that year a *Brownist* or *Independent* congregation was established in London. These Brownists—so called from Robert Browne, a clergyman of the English Church,[1] who afterwards recanted

[1] "Although Richard Fitz was the first pastor of the first Independent Church in England, to Robert Browne belongs the honour of founding the denomination."—Skeats, *History of the Free Churches*, p. 18. It was stated by Dr. Mackennal, at the Grindelwald Conference, that documents have been recently found in the State Paper Offices which indicate the existence of a Separatist Church in London in 1566.

CHAP. IV.

his opinions—had persuaded themselves that any two or three Christians could of themselves *de novo* organise and constitute a perfect and complete church of CHRIST—a church "*independent* of all external control;" they argued that mere voluntary association for purposes of worship ensured to each separate congregation the Headship and government and guidance of our LORD JESUS CHRIST. According to them, the church had its origin in the action of man, rather than the inspiration of CHRIST. Moreover, they were possessed with the idea that the Church of England "had so much of Rome that she had nothing of CHRIST in her discipline;" indeed, there were those who proclaimed that she was no Church of GOD at all, but the synagogue of Satan.[1] It is hardly to be wondered at that, with such views, they should both make a separation themselves and also express an infinite scorn for the Puritans, who shared some of their opinions, but declined to follow their example. Then began that process of disintegration which since that day has proceeded at such a frightful pace that, instead of one Church, "one body" of CHRIST in England, we have now some two hundred and sixty bodies, most of which claim to

Fuller, vol. v. p. 63.

[1] "The Brownists' separation, which the old Nonconformists confuted, consisted in a denial (1) That the English ministers were true ministers; (2) and their churches true churches; (3) or such as a Christian might lawfully live in communion with in ordinary worship; and, therefore, (4) they were bound to renounce them and set up others."—Baxter, *A Second True Defence of the meer Nonconformists*, p. 51. The 29th and 30th *Articles of the Apology of the Brownists* (1604) "maintained that the Church's government and worship were anti-Christian; the 31st, that the English is not a part of the Christian Church; the 32nd, that all who will be saved are bound to come forth of this anti-Christian Church; the 39th, that it was the duty of the civil magistrate to suppress and root out the ministry of the Church and apply its property to civil uses, and to establish and maintain by law the true religion."—Palmer, *Treatise on the Church*, 403.

be lawful and veritable "churches of CHRIST." It was the Independents who set the ball rolling.[1] Not content with "dissenting" from the doctrine and regimen of the Reformed Church, they must needs forsake her communion altogether.

And only a year or two later, *i.e.*, in 1570, the Romanists followed their example. Up to this date, much as those who still acknowledged the Roman pontiff as universal bishop had resented many of the acts and views of the Reformers, there had been no act of severance, no breaking away on their part from communion with Churchmen; no conventicles had been established to compete with the parish churches; rival altars and priesthoods were unknown. Indeed, we have it, on the authority of Lord Chief Justice Coke, that in 1560 Pope Pius IV. sent his nuncio to England offering to sanction all the changes in the English Church, including the revision of the Liturgy, the translation of the Scriptures into the vernacular, and the appointment of "Protestant" bishops, if only his supremacy might be recognised.[2] But the Bull, *Regnans in excelsis*, which Pius V. issued in 1570, excommunicating Queen Elizabeth, declaring her throne vacant, absolving her subjects from all allegiance to her, and commanding Romanists to hold aloof from the Reformed worship, changed everything: it involved a

[1] "Separation is . . . the old word for what we now call Congregationalism."—Dr. Mackennal.

[2] This statement was made at the Norwich Assizes in A.D. 1606. Coke added, "I have often heard from the Queen's own mouth, and I have frequently conferred with noblemen of the highest rank of the state who had seen and read the Pope's letter on this subject, as I have related it to you. And this is as true as I am an honest man."—Charge 28. See Sir Roger Twysden's *Historical Vindication of the Church of England*, p. 176; Hook's *Lives of the Archbishops of Canterbury*, vol. iv., New Series, pp. 261–262; and Aubrey Moore, *History of the Reformation*, p. 255.

CHAP. IV.

fresh secession from *the* Church. No doubt those who seceded had persuaded themselves that their duty to the Catholic Church required them to forsake and abjure the National Church; no doubt they argued that the English Church was schismatical, if not heretical—and that just because they listened to a foreign bishop and his emissaries rather than to their own pastors; just because they were awed into submission by the forged decretals which he held *in terrorem* over them; but this does not alter the fact that they broke away from the ancient historic Church and founded a new communion in the land,[1] a communion which, in defiance of all early precedents, called itself the Church of *Rome*, and yet claimed to be the Church in *England!* The new communion, it is true, wore many of the cast-off clothes of the old, but the old Church was elsewhere. She did not alter her personality, she did not change her identity, when she cleansed her face and changed her raiment.

The next body to break away and to form a third "denomination" in the land were the *Baptists*. The year A.D. 1633 witnessed the formation of the first Baptist congregation in England. Certain Dutch Anabaptists had been burnt at Smithfield in 1539, and a little community of English Baptists had existed for some time at Amsterdam, but it was not, so far as we know, until the year just named that they assumed a visible shape in this country. In that year a number of persons who had up to that time attended the Independent meeting in Blackfriars seceded and formed a separate congregation. Though in harmony with the teaching of the Brownists on other points, they had long "dissented" from their

[1] "Their societies were gathered out of the churches of England and Ireland by Jesuits and missionary priests in the reign of Queen Elizabeth."—Palmer, i. 243.

views, as from those of the Church, on infant baptism, and they now judged it necessary to form a distinct community; not, be it observed, because of any "article of a standing or falling church," but because of a question of *ritual*,[1] a question as to the age at which and the manner in which the sacrament of Baptism should be administered. We may be pardoned, surely, for thinking that this was hardly a question of sufficient moment to warrant a new breach in the Christian body. And we rejoice to find that some Nonconformists are of the same opinion,[2] namely, that to "build up a sect with a special name on the basis of a sacrament . . . is an uncatholic procedure, and as indefensible as would be the institution of a second sect based on a reform of the Mass, to be called the *Lord's Supperist Denomination*."[3] The more so as there is nothing to prevent persons who have embraced Antipædobaptist views remaining in the communion of the Church—indeed, some of the earliest Baptists did so remain. The Church, it is true, says that "the baptism of young children is in any wise to be retained in the Church" (Article XXVII.), but if any of her members presume to think otherwise, they incur neither penalties nor disabilities by so doing. On the contrary, she has provided an office for the "baptism of such as are of riper years," and those who then desire immersion can have it. This emergence of the first Baptist congregation is worthy

See Curteis, p. 213, and Wall, i. 676–7.

See note p. 15.

[1] It was on this ground that they withdrew from the *Independents*; no doubt they held Brownist views as to the Church being anti-christian.

[2] Both Presbyterians and Independents held that to separate on account of Infant Baptism was an unreasonable scruple. Stillingfleet, p. 76. John Robinson of Leyden, one of the fathers of Independency, denounced the Baptists as "vile heretics and schismatics."—Skeats, p. 34.

[3] Rev. Edward White, *Life in Christ*, p. 291.

CHAP. IV.

of special notice, inasmuch as it shows very clearly, first, how dissent ripens into Dissent; secondly, the fissiparous tendency of Dissent, its trick of reproducing itself—for the Baptists separated from the Independents rather than the Church—and last, not least, the way in which the unity and cohesion of GOD'S Church have been sacrificed for the most minute and insignificant of reasons.

But this is even more strikingly illustrated for us in the rise of the *Quakers*, which dates from the year 1646 or thereabouts. It may be observed in passing how closely the Quakers followed on the heels of the Baptists. "It is only the first step that costs," and secession once begun is readily imitated. We have it from George Fox himself, that when "one first-day morning the LORD opened unto" him that "being bred at Oxford or Cambridge was not enough to fit and qualify men to be ministers of CHRIST," he instantly determined, instead of asking whether the Church, and indeed every sane man, was not of the same opinion, to go to church (and to meetings alike) no more. "What should I follow these for? So neither these nor any of the Dissenting people could I join with, but was a stranger to all, relying wholly upon the LORD JESUS CHRIST." Here is a man who actually forsakes the Church of God, and who will have as little fellowship with the sects which had separated from it, and indeed stands aloof from *everybody*, and all because he has discovered a self-evident truth, which both the Church and the sects held and asserted as strongly as he! Could the force of fanaticism farther go? Here was "Dissent" without any actual "dissent;" without at least any divergence of opinion on the point which led him to separate, to gather disciples round him, and ultimately to form the estimable Society of Friends.

Journal, vol. i. p. 53.

Curteis, p. 256.

Of the sect which next arose to add to the distractions of our English Christianity, the *Unitarians*, whose existence as a separate denomination we may perhaps refer to the year 1719, and who, like the Baptists, sprang for the most part from bodies of Christians, Presbyterians, which had already drifted away from the Church, it must be admitted that at first sight they have a much stronger reason for separation than any of the communions which we have so far considered. For the Church is so committed to the doctrine of the Trinity; that "most ancient of all mysteries" is so interwoven with her Creeds, and so inwrought into her services, that it may be urged that no man can honestly remain in her fellowship who repudiates, or even doubts, that doctrine. But it is to be remembered—and I consider the case of the Unitarian at some length, just because his is the *extreme* case; just because neither Independent nor Baptist, nor any other sectary, can plead anything like the apparent justification that he can—it is to be remembered, first, that the doctrine of the Church is as distinctly Unitarian as the most pronounced Unitarian could desire. If by Unitarian is meant *Monotheist*—a believer in the unity of GOD (and that is what the word does mean)—the Unitarian, commonly so called, has no more right to arrogate that name to himself than has every loyal Churchman. *The Creed of the Church is Unitarian*[1]—witness the Nicene symbol, "I believe in *One* GOD," &c. Secondly, that certain articles in the Creeds have been expressly framed with a view to guard against Tritheism, so that if the Unitarian feels that he has a witness to bear against Polytheism, he will find such witness pro-

[1] See Curteis, *Dissent in Relation to the Church of England*, p. 319 *sqq.*, to which I am indebted for this idea.

CHAP. IV.

vided for him in the Church's own words. Thirdly, that Unitarians are not required to subscribe to any Creed or form of words whatsoever, except the Apostles' Creed—a confession of faith which most of them (for they differ much amongst themselves) can and do make, no less than Churchmen. They are not required to subscribe either to the Constantinopolitan or Athanasian formularies; if they cannot *use* those hymns of praise, as we not unseldom find hymns which we cannot altogether endorse or approve, they have but to pass them by. Fourthly, that if they object, as they do, to the (so-called) "metaphysical subtleties" and the "minute distinctions" of the Athanasian Creed, they should in fairness remember that these definitions have one and all been forced upon the Church by the misbeliefs of heretics. "Athanasius had to define," says Dr. R. W. Dale, "because the Arians shuffled." Every clause of that Creed is the *denial of some untruth held* and *taught about God*.[1] And it is also to be borne in mind (5), that not only is the Unitarian not required to subscribe to this or to the Nicene Creed, but he is free to dissent from either or both. What he is not free to do is to express his dissent from either, so long as he remains a *minister* of the English Church. He cannot be allowed to proclaim his dissent from either, but must, on the contrary, profess them both, because he has publicly, before admission to the ranks of the ministry, declared his assent to both, and the Church's faith remains unchanged. If his views have changed, and he now desires to make havoc of the faith which he once preached, then he must as an honest man retire into

[1] If the reader cares to pursue this subject farther, he will find the question of the Athanasian Creed dealt with at some length in *Church or Chapel?—an Eirenicon*, pp. 263-282.

lay communion, but it does not follow that he must leave the church, the society of Christians, altogether. He may dissent; but why should he separate? Has he then neither part nor lot in Christianity? Has he *nothing* in common with his fellow-Christians? And lastly, to take the lowest ground, if he wants to win acceptance for his Arian opinions, if he is persuaded of their truth and says he must proclaim them at any cost, then he is much more likely to be listened to, if he remains in the church, than if he leaves it. For so long as he remains, however much his views may be suspected and distrusted, still he has something in common with Churchmen; he is not regarded as an alien, is not an outsider; he is still a brother and in some respects an ally. But the moment he leaves the church, all this is changed. From that day forward he assumes a hostile attitude, and is inevitably regarded both by the church and the world as an enemy. The very worst step he can take, consequently, even to advance the views he holds so dear—and the same remark applies to all "dissenters"—is to make a breach, to insist on a visible separation from all who think otherwise, to collect all who share his sentiments into a rival community. But he has something else to think of than his own particular views, which after all may easily be wrong, for he is not infallible; he has to consider Christianity as a whole; he has to remember its mission to the world. It must be clear to him, if he reflects at all, that the cause of CHRIST can never, in the nature of things, be served by disunion and strife, and that if his Unitarianism would gain by secession, CHRIST'S Christianity would suffer. And the whole is greater than the part, and more sacred than the part. Religion is surely to be considered before his (possibly erroneous) views of one

CHAP. IV.

or two doctrines of religion. I think it will be clear from these considerations that even Unitarians are under no compulsion to make a schism in the Christian body. No sinful terms of communion are imposed on them. Even if they could not join in the worship or receive the sacraments of the Church (though the case of Mr. Vance Smith proves that some of them can), they had better far withdraw into silence and obscurity, than cause a breach, a rent, with all its humiliating and distressing consequences, among the brethren of the Lord. If their Unitarianism is not of such an injurious type as to merit excommunication, then why should they insist on excommunicating themselves?[1]

2 John 10.

But if the Unitarians have, of all separatists from "the church throughout all" England, the strongest reasons for secession, it must be said that the various bodies of *Methodists*, whose defection from the National Church is the last which need be noticed here, have the very least. For they have not, or at least the original seceders had not, the excuse which other Nonconformists were always able to allege, of doctrinal divergence; nor can they

About A.D. 1795.

[1] I hope it will not be inferred, because I have ventured to argue that there is nothing in the teaching of the Church of England to *compel* the Unitarian to withdraw from her communion, that I state definitely that he is *entitled* to retain his place amongst her children. I say nothing of the kind. His heresies may be of such a character, they may be so subversive of the faith of the gospel, as to demand his excommunication from the Christian body. All that I affirm is, that he need not *separate himself* on grounds of conscience. I have regarded his conformity, his continuance in the Church, exclusively from his standpoint. What the Church's duty with regard to him may be is an entirely different question. I say that he *can—in foro conscientiæ* -retain his place, if he is *permitted* so to do. Mr. Vance Smith, for example, found no difficulty in partaking of the Holy Communion at our altars. Whether he should have been admitted to Holy Communion is altogether another thing.

Tit. iii. 10; 2 Thess. iii. 6; 1 Tim. vi. 5.

plead, again, the instructions or principles of their founders, for it is notorious that the Wesleys were in perfect doctrinal agreement with the Prayer Book, and it is also notorious that they solemnly protested, and that again and again, and in the most explicit terms, against a secession. All this has been proved up to the hilt by many writers—I may perhaps be allowed to mention a little volume entitled *John Wesley, being Dead, yet Speaketh*,[1] as presenting this proof in a concise form. It is true the fathers of Methodism dissented—and small blame to them for so doing—dissented energetically from the lax morality and defective discipline of the eighteenth-century Church; it is also true that some of their descendants have quite of late discovered that there are "serious doctrinal differences" between the Church's teaching and theirs. But this does not alter the fact that the early Methodists, and even those who are responsible for the secession, had no quarrel with the Church's standards; they could not have, so long as they were true to name. Their departure is a case of Dissent without any real dissent. That they have since their founder's death gradually drifted into separation, is due to a persuasion on the part of the preachers that this course was inevitable if the work was to be conserved and extended. "The *necessities of the work of God*," says an able Wesleyan, the Rev. Prof. Beet, "*have compelled them to assume* the position of an independent Church, with all the ordinances committed by CHRIST to His Church. In these necessities," he goes on to say, "they have recognised the hand of GOD." And I have no doubt that other Wesleyans would give a similar account of their history. They believe, that

Church in the West, Dec. 1888.

[1] Published by S.P.C.K., 1891.

CHAP. IV.

is to say, that Almighty GOD Himself has brought about the breach, has, in fact, conducted them by His guiding hand into disunion, in order by this means, by setting up chapel against church, table against altar, rostrum against pulpit, to advance the cause of peace and goodwill, and to extend the kingdom of truth and charity! To many Christians it will seem inconceivable that the "Author of peace and Lover of concord" should in any way promote evil —for, regard it as we will, division *is* an evil, and Dissenters themselves allow it to be such—in order that good may come; but this is nevertheless the ground on which Methodism has hitherto justified its severance, in opposition to the warnings and entreaties of both the Wesleys, from the hereditary Church of the realm.[1] The preachers thought they must turn the Societies—for all the various branches of Methodism began as mere "Societies," or "Connexions," or "Associations"—into "churches," they must claim for themselves the ministerial office, they must add another to the rival denominations of Britain, in order that the work of saving souls and of spreading Scriptural holiness throughout the land might be done more effectually than it could be done by union and submission to constituted authority, and co-operation and solidarity.

And the result has been—what else could it be when the unity of the Church, so precious to the Church's Head, has been sacrificed *in God's name?*—that the flood-gates have been opened to Dissent; that Methodism itself has been honeycombed with divisions; that scurrilous pamphlets even have occasioned a schism; and that at last the very idea of

[1] "Wesley had no thought of founding a community outside the Anglican Church, and strongly urged his followers to remain in the ancient fold."—Beet.

"one body" has become a dead letter to most Englishmen. Dissent has proceeded at such a pace that the "one body" is now represented by over two hundred rival "bodies," and "schism"—I borrow the words of a learned Presbyterian[1]—"is thought no sin, and that which the Reformers shuddered at and shrank from, that secession which they feared to make even from a Church so corrupt as Rome then was, every petty ecclesiastic now presumes to imitate."

Such has been, in brief, the course both of dissent and of Dissent amongst us. But this last quotation, this reference to secession from Rome, reminds me that I shall very probably be told that this review is wanting in one most important and material feature. I shall be reminded that I have forgotten to state that the Reformation was itself an act of secession, and that the Church of England is nothing but a split from the Church Catholic. I have not hazarded this assertion, simply because it is not true; because it is a most audacious perversion of the truth. I know that it is constantly attempted to palliate or justify Dissent by charging it upon English Churchmen, but it is a charge which will not bear examination, and which can only be made in entire ignorance or suppression of the stubborn facts of history.[2] For, if the English Church at

[1] Dr. Marcus Dods.

[2] Skeats in his *History of the Free Churches* supplies a striking instance of the way in which history is manufactured. He states that Henry VIII. "founded a new church in England," and then, without alleging a shred of proof, assumes that "none but eager controversialists will dispute the accuracy of this assertion!" Had he lived a little longer, he would have seen it disputed even by an agent of the Liberation Society. Some of the tracts of that Society, however, state that "this Church was founded by Act of Parliament in the reign of Henry VIII." But no Act is cited. Dr. Conder alleges that our creed,

CHAP. IV.

the time of the Reformation did separate from the Ancient Church of the land, there will be no difficulty in alleging the Act or statute or ordinance or injunction by which this severance was attempted. The history of those years is not a blank; the statute book itself bears witness to what was done. Very good. Then we challenge those who accuse us of secession to give us some particle of proof. Assertions are valueless when unsupported by evidence, and in this matter all the evidence lies the other way. The Church of England *has never by act or deed separated from anybody*, at home or abroad, and certainly the Reformation in this country, unlike the same movement in many parts of Europe, involved no separation.[1] What she did during those three hundred years of slow and gradual reform—for the Reformation was not a single act, nor was it confined to one century[2]—was, first, to shake herself free from the

constitution, ministry, worship, and revenues are settled by Act of Parliament (*Why are we Dissenters?* p. 17), but he also very wisely makes no attempt at quoting *the* Acts. If he means that the Church is not emancipated from State control, that is quite true. But it is also true of Nonconformist communions. The trust deeds which define the doctrines of certain chapels have been canvassed in the law courts. Lord Selborne tells us that "the Court of Chancery has decided that baptism is not indispensable among the Baptists." The Wesleyans at this moment are contemplating an application to Parliament to alter their Deed of Declaration.

The Christians of this country were formally *excommunicated* by the Roman Pontiff, but they neither excommunicated him nor his communion. See Gore, *Roman Catholic Claims*, pp. 132, 137.

[1] "We do not protest against the Church of Rome, but against her errors; remove them, and our protestation ceases."—Archbishop Laud to Fisher.

[2] "The Reformation . . . was not a single event; it is rather a great historical process which is being continued to the present, having its roots in the centuries before Henry, and the event which is called the Reformation is simply a point in the religious history of the English people."—Dr. Mackennal, *Review of the Churches*, 1892, p. 307. "Under the name of Reformation we

thraldom of the Papacy, declaring by her Convocations of clergy—that of Canterbury spoke on March 31, 1534, and that of York on May 5 of the same year—that "the Bishop of Rome hath no greater jurisdiction conferred on him by GOD over this country than any other foreign bishop;" and, secondly, to reject certain doctrines, and to purge herself of certain abuses, which in the course of many centuries had clogged and depraved both her faith and practice. But that there was no breach in her continuity, no sort of separation from *the* Church of GOD in this land, is abundantly clear—clear, first, from the fact both that clergy and people, with very few exceptions, retained their position as officers and members of the Church all through these reforms, and also clear, secondly, from the fact that English Churchmen, both Papists and Protestants, remained members of the same communion until the year 1570, when the Romanists (they were very few in number) seceded and presently formed a sect.[1] But perhaps the best proof is that *no statute or Act or ordinance can be cited which suggests that any new church or body was formed at the Reformation*—if it can, again we say, let it be produced—whilst "*every official document of Elizabeth's reign*," and, I may add, not a few of those of earlier reigns, "*expressly disclaims any intention of breaking the Church's continuity.*" The Prayer Book itself may surely claim to be heard on this question. If so, the preface *Concerning the Service of the Church*, first published at the very crisis of the Reformation in 1549, is decisive as to the continuity of the reformed with the pre-Reformation

See Gladstone, *The State*, &c., vol. ii. pp. 107–116.

E.g., 25 Hen. VIII. cap. xxi.

jumble together a great number of changes spread over many years."—Freeman, *Disestablishment and Disendowment*, p. 14.

[1] The evidence may be seen set out at considerable length in Palmer's *Treatise on the Church*, vol. i. pp. 455–459.

CHAP. IV.

body. "The Service in *this Church of England*," [1] it says, "these many years hath been read in Latin to the people." To the same purpose speaks the Act of 1543—"to establish a form of pure and sincere teaching agreeable to God's Word and the true doctrine of the *Catholic and Apostolic Church*." Tonstal, Bishop of Durham, again, is not accused of any Protestant leanings—he was deprived of his bishopric by Edward VI. and restored by Queen Mary—yet he wrote thus to Cardinal Pole on July 13, 1536: "It has all along been his [Henry the VIIIth's] practice to adhere to the Catholic Church. . . . It is true that he has rescued the English Church from the encroachments of the Church of Rome, but if this be singularity, he deserves commendation, for the King has only . . . *helped the English Church to her ancient freedom*." To these earlier I venture to add some later testimonies, and first, that of Richard Hooker, who modestly pleads, "We hope that to reform ourselves, if at any time we have done amiss, is not to sever ourselves from the Church we were of before. In the Church we were and we are so still." Similarly, Bishop Hall: "Be it known to all the world that our Church is only reformed or repaired, not made new: there is not one stone of a new foundation laid by us." Next let us hear the Nonconformist authors of the *Grave and Modest Confutation of the Separatists*, who, in answer to the objection "that our Church was not rightly gathered at the time of the Reformation," replied that "she took not her beginning of being a church by separating herself from the Roman synagogue, but . . . is a purer and more faithful church than before." "We

Eccles. Pol., iii. 1. 10.

[1] The italics in these quotations are mine.

are acquitted from the imputation of schism," said Stillingfleet in his sermon on the *Mischief of Separation* (A.D. 1680), "for we only resume our just rights, as the British nation did as to civil government upon the ruin of the Roman Empire." Among more recent deliverances upon this subject, I may cite a late Dean of Arches, Sir R. Philimore, who says, "It is not [only] a religious, but a legal error to suppose that a new Church was introduced into this realm at the time of the Reformation. It is no less the language of our law than of our divinity that *the old Church was restored*, not that a new one was substituted." "It is evident"—I now quote Palmer— "to those who have perused her history that the Church of England never did at any time, by any voluntary act whatever, separate herself from the communion of the universal church. We defy our adversaries to produce such an act. Let them name any English synod, any authentic document whatever, which proves that the Church of England did, either in act or intention, voluntarily separate or cut herself off from the communion of the rest of the universal church. *No such act has been or can be produced.* All that is pretended by our adversaries is that our churches are separated from the communion of the Roman pontiff, and therefore must necessarily be cut off from the Church of Christ. . . . The Church of England removed the *jurisdiction* of the pontiff, but did not separate from his *communion*." "Nothing was further," writes Mr. Freeman, the historian,[1] "from the mind of either Henry VIII. or of Elizabeth, than the thought that either of them was doing anything new. Neither of them ever thought for a moment of *establishing a new Church*,

On the Church, vol. i. pp. 221-222.

[1] *Disestablishment and Disendowment*, p. 26.

CHAP. IV.

or of establishing anything at all. In their own eyes, they were not *establishing*, but *reforming;* they were neither pulling down nor setting up, but simply putting to rights. They were getting rid of innovations and corruptions; they were casting off an usurped foreign jurisdiction; they were restoring to the Crown its ancient authority over the State ecclesiastical." "I can find no trace"—these are the words of Mr. Gladstone[1]—"of that opinion which is now common in the mouths of unthinking persons, that the Roman Catholic Church was abolished in England at the period of the Reformation, and that a Protestant Church was put in its place, nor does there appear to have been so much as a doubt in the mind of any one of them whether the Church legally established in England after the Reformation was *the same institution* with the Church legally established in England before the Reformation." And again: "There was no organisation of a rival church in England until the twelfth year of Elizabeth, when the Pope, Pius V., had published his deposing Bull: then began the state of schism in this country."[2] "It is an obvious historical fact," says a writer who will not be suspected of any partiality for the English Church,[3] "that Parker was the successor of Augustine, just as clearly as Lanfranc and Becket. . . . There is no point at which it can be said, 'Here the old Church ends, here the new begins.'" "I know that some people are to be found," writes Lord Selbourne,[4] "who pretend that a new Church of England was set up at that time and the old Church cast out. . . . For that pretence there

[1] *The State in its Relations to the Church*, vol. ii. 127, 1841.
[2] *Ibid.* p. 167.
[3] Beard, *Hibbert Lectures*, 1883, p. 311.
[4] *Endowments and Establishment*, p. 16.

is no foundation in law or in fact. A Church does not lose its identity or sameness, as an organised institution, by changes in form or ceremony. . . . In the English Reformation, the organisation of the Church, as the Church of England, was not displaced or broken at any single point. . . . And I think it right to add (though it is not my object to enter at all into theological questions) that nothing was then done which made the Church of England really different in any point of substance affecting religious faith or practice from what it had originally been in the days of Augustine the first Archbishop of Canterbury." I venture to hope that these testimonies will be regarded as conclusive. But if any should still hesitate, then I proceed to remind him that Mr. Fisher, of the Liberation Society, has publicly expressed his acceptance of this view. It would perhaps be too much to hope that after this we shall hear no more of the exploded assertion that the Church of England is itself a sect, but we have the comfort of knowing that such statements can only be hazarded in ignorance or in fraud.

CHAPTER V.

NONCONFORMITY CONTRARY TO THE EXAMPLE OF CHRIST.

"Never were any priests or public teachers more corrupt, more totally estranged from God, than those in the days of our Blessed Lord. Were they not mere whited walls? Were not those that were the best of them painted sepulchres, full of pride, lust, envy, covetousness, of all ungodliness and unrighteousness? Is not this the account which our Lord Himself, who knew what was in man, gives of them? But did He therefore refrain from that public service which was performed by these very men, or did He direct His Apostles so to do? Nay, just the contrary! In consequence of which, as He constantly attended them Himself, so did His disciples."—Wesley, *Sermon CIV.*

CHAP. V.

THE four preceding chapters have been almost entirely devoted to explanations and definitions bearing on the subject of English Nonconformity. I now turn to the Christianity of Christ, so far as it deals with Church divisions. I proceed to set forth the arguments which, as I contend, conclusively prove that Dissent is contrary to such Christianity. And in the first place, I shall show that it is contrary to, and is condemned by, the *example* of our Most Holy LORD.

I begin by remarking, that if separation from the Church of God is ever justifiable, then separation from the Jewish Church was not only justifiable, but necessary. If Dissent is ever inevitable, is ever a sacred duty, then assuredly it was a sacred and imperative duty to secede from the church of the Old Covenant.

CHAP. V.

I do not suppose that it will be denied that the Hebrew people formed a "church," and more, formed *the* church of the earlier dispensation, the church before CHRIST. How can it be denied, when St. Stephen, speaking in the HOLY GHOST, called that people "*the church* in the wilderness"? It is true the word "church" is not found in the English translation of the Old Testament—the word *ecclesia*, though, it should be said, *is* found in the Septuagint—but that is only because our translators have preferred to use the synonymous word "congregation." For "church" and "congregation" mean one and the same thing.

Acts vii. 38. Deut. iv. 10; xviii. 16; xxxi. 30; Ps. xxii. 22; 1 Chron. xiii. 2.

And if the Jewish people were not—though they are expressly called—a "church," what else were they? They were, confessedly, the elect and covenant people of GOD, and election and covenant are among the marks of a church. They were "a kingdom of priests and a holy nation." They had a sanctuary, a priesthood, a hierarchy, altars, sacrifices, services, rites, feasts, ordinances, laws, Scriptures. If they did not form a church, they certainly had all the structure and features, all the machinery and organisation of a church. If they did not form a church, it is singular—I might say it is unfortunate—that the language which describes their relation to GOD is borrowed by St. Peter and referred to by St. John, when they are severally speaking of the Christian church. If they did not form a church—that is to say, a chosen and covenant society *called* to special privileges and to special responsibilities; a people *taken out* from other people to be the treasure and school and army and sanctuary of the Most High, to be, in fact, what the Christian church confessedly is at a later date—then Holy Scripture has deceived us; then it is difficult to trace any consistency or

Compare Ps. xxii. 22; with Heb. ii. 12. Exod. xix. 6. 1 Pet. ii. 9. Rev. i. 6.

CHAP. V.

continuity in GOD's dealings with mankind; it is difficult to resist the conclusion that the principles, the fundamental principles, of the Old Covenant differ materially from those of the New.

But we will not dispute about a word. If the Jewish race did not compose a "church," at any rate it formed a *religious community*. It constituted a "congregation," and more, it constituted (whilst the dispensation lasted) *the* congregation of the LORD. It was a community for religious purposes, which was sanctioned, founded, ordered, inhabited of
Eph. ii. 12. the Eternal. Of this religious "commonwealth," of this "congregation," whatever it was, one thing is certain—that "its builder and maker was God." On this point, at any rate, we shall be agreed.

Very good. Then I say that if separation from a religious community, from *the* religious community, founded and governed by the Most High, can ever be lawful, can ever be necessary, can ever be a binding duty, then separation from the congregation of Israel at the time of our Saviour CHRIST was lawful and necessary and obligatory. If Dissent has ever been permissible, ever been imperative, since the people of GOD were organised into a society at all, then I affirm that Dissent from the community and polity of Israel was distinctly an imperative duty.

For has there been in the whole history of religion—I had almost said in the whole experience of mankind—a community more hateful, more loathsome, more honeycombed with corruption, more eaten up with formalism, more gangrened with hypocrisy than the Jewish commonwealth at the time when the Son of GOD in His great humility came to visit it?[1] No

[1] "Never did any age breed a generation more fruitful in wickedness than this was since the beginning of the world."—Josephus (of the Jews of A.D. 70).

doubt society elsewhere, both before and since that day, has often been more immoral and more criminal, but then such society has not professed to be a "kingdom of priests;" it has not claimed to be the holy people of the LORD; it has not committed its crimes in the name of religion. No, I doubt whether the world has ever seen a more hideous and revolting moral spectacle than Palestine afforded in the days of the Son of Man.

And it may perhaps be well to observe here that this Jewish Church—or, if you prefer it, this "congregation," this religious community—at that date was only true to its antecedents at an earlier period. It was no strange thing had happened to it. The Jews of that day were only "filling up the measure of their fathers." Can it be necessary to remind the reader how both the law and the prophets ring with denunciations of the unfaithfulness, the wickedness of the chosen people![1] Take all these complaints and charges out of the prophetic writings, and how much, or rather how little, would be left? What must have been the moral and religious state of a community of which such words could be written as we find, just to take two examples, in Isaiah v. and Jerem. v.? It is the simple truth that at very few periods of its history had this "holy (*i.e., separated, dedicated*) nation" chosen to such high privilege, been anything but "a sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evildoers, children that deal corruptly." The Jews of the first century were only the "*sons* of them that slew the prophets." Isa. i. 4. St. Matt. xxiii. 31.

And yet, it is to be remembered that all through these fifteen centuries of contumacy and shame; despite this chronic unfaithfulness, this inveterate

[1] It was from the first an "evil congregation" (Numb. xiv. 27, xvi. 27; Exod. xvi. 2).

CHAP. V.

depravity, when even the heads of the community made their children to pass through the fire unto Moloch, and when Chemosh, the abomination of Moab, had his high place "on the mount that is before Jerusalem," in full view of the temple and altar of the LORD; or when there was but a handful in Israel whose knees had not bowed unto Baal and whose mouths had not obscenely kissed him, and even when in the courts of the holy and beautiful house itself might be seen "women weeping for Tammuz" and men "worshipping the sun toward the east," it is to be remembered that not even then, amid these foul abominations, was one word spoken by seer, priest, or prophet about separation, about any sort of secession from the Old Testament Church.[1] It does not seem to have ever entered the minds even of those writers who have painted its history in such lurid colours to offer one hint, one faint suggestion of Dissent from it. Though the prophets prophesied falsely, and the priests bare rule by their means, and the people loved to have it so, yet the idea of leaving the people of GOD and setting up a fresh and purer communion does not seem to have been regarded as a possibility—unless perchance by Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, who "*made Israel to sin.*" Vehemently as the prophets and messengers of GOD "dissented" from the corruptions of their respective ages, loudly as they protested against the whoredoms of Israel, constantly as they denounced the terrible wrath that

2 Kings xxiii. 10; 1 Kings xi. 7. *ibid.*

1 Kings xix. 18.

Ezek. viii. 14.

[1] "The sons of Eli were sons of Belial. It is true men abhorred the offerings of the LORD on their account, and yet they constantly attended them. And do you suppose that Samuel, holy as he was, ever advised them to do otherwise? Were not the prophets and public teachers equally strangers to GOD from this time to that of the Babylonish captivity? But did Isaiah or any of the prophets exhort them for that cause to forsake the ordinances of GOD?"—Wesley, *Sermon CIV.* (vol. vii. p. 180).

was to come, they never by word or deed counselled or suggested the idea of Dissent. If they did, no doubt the chapter and verse where this is recorded can be cited.

But urgent as were the reasons for Dissent all through the history of God's ancient people—if, that is to say, Dissent is ever lawful, ever necessary —they were, it appears to me, more forcible and imperious than ever at the hallowed time of the Incarnation and the Crucifixion. For though the devil of idolatry had been cast out, never to return, at the time of the Babylonian captivity, yet seven other devils, worse than the first, had then entered in and taken possession of Immanuel's land. We have only to remember what the leaders and teachers of the people were like, in order to understand how complete must have been the demoralisation of the entire community. "Ye *offspring of vipers*,"—these are the terms in which the Pharisees and Sadducees are described when they first come before us in St. Matthew's Gospel; "hypocrites," "children of hell," "blind guides," "whited sepulchres," "serpents,"—these are among the terms in which they were described three years later by our Saviour CHRIST Himself. It is doubtful whether the world has ever held more rapacious and unprincipled men than the chief priests and rulers of that age. When such miscreants as these sate in Moses' seat, what must have been the condition of their disciples? But we are not left to inferences as to their religious condition. We know that the very *key* of knowledge had been taken away from them; we know that they had been taught such trivialities as that an oath by the temple was nothing, whilst an oath by the gold of the temple was binding; that they had been released by legal subtleties from such

Chap. iii. 7.

St. Matt. xxiii. 16.

CHAP. V.

sacred obligations as the support of their parents; that the husband had been permitted to put away his wife for the most frivolous of reasons; that "precepts of men" had overlaid and smothered and effectually abrogated the commandments of GOD; that the Word of GOD, in short, had been made absolutely "void" by a body of traditions. We are not surprised, therefore, that our LORD spoke of the people as "sheep without a shepherd" and as "*lost* sheep." What could be the result of such instruction, but that the *am-haaretz*, the ignorant and unlearned, should be steeped to the ears in formalism and superstition? Breathing as they did an atmosphere charged with hypocrisy and cupidity, it might justly have been said of them, as it was of their fathers, "The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot even unto the head, there is no soundness in it, but wounds and bruises and festering sores." It is to be considered that, all through St. John's Gospel at least, it is *the Jews*—and not their chief priests and scribes only—who are described as the enemies of our LORD. It is to be remembered that St. Peter, St. Stephen, and St. Paul severally accuse the *people* as well as their rulers of the crime of compassing our LORD'S death. It is clear, therefore, that "in head and in members" the Jewish Church was then rotten to the core.

St. Mark vii. 12.
Ibid. 8, 9.
Ver. 13.
St. Matt. x. 6.
Ibid. xv. 24.
Isa. i. 5, 6.
Acts iii. 14, 15.
Ibid. vii. 52.
Ibid. xiii. 27.

So that, if Dissent, if separation from GOD'S Church or community has ever been a duty, then separation from the religious communion established in Palestine in our LORD'S days was a duty. Never have doctrines been more depraved; never has GOD been more dishonoured; never has religion been more shamefully prostituted. I beg the reader to observe, however, that I am not concerned to prove

this. I am not concerned to show that these corruptions were worse than, for example, those of the Papacy. My argument does not require me to establish that this Jewish Church was more demoralised than the Christian Church has *ever* been. All that I contend for is that, whatever evils or abuses may attach to the *reformed* Church of England—for it is only since the Church was reformed that there has been any Dissent—whatever the perversions of doctrine, whatever the formalism, whatever the Erastianism, at any rate *its condition has never been worse than that* of the Jewish congregation. And this I feel sure will not be denied. The most prejudiced Nonconformist, however meanly he may think of the Anglican communion since the Elizabethan settlement, will never say that it has been worse than the church of Annas and Caiaphas, the church which, in the persons of its rulers, "killed the Prince of Life."[1]

And not only so, but the more spiritual and enlightened men were, the greater was their obligation to secede—if secession is a remedy approved of GOD. The greater the obligation to secede, because the clearer the perception of the sores and evils of the community. The "common people" might be excused if they did not appraise those abuses aright, but not so men "anointed by the HOLY GHOST;" not so a man filled with "the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD;" not so GOD "manifest in the flesh."

Isa. xi. 2.

[1] "There were not the same reasons why various bodies of men should afterwards separate from the Church of England. No sinful terms of communion were imposed upon them, neither are at this day. Most of them separated, either because of some *opinion* or some *mode of worship* which they did not approve of."—Wesley, vol. vii. p. 181.

CHAP. V.

It is clear, therefore, that if Dissent has ever been a necessity for any man since the world was, has ever been called for by the inexorable laws of conscience, then it was the duty of our LORD JESUS CHRIST to withdraw Himself from the church or communion of Israel. He who knew men as no other man ever did, He who could read their thoughts, He who knew the full extent of their hypocrisy and depravity, He should have been the very first to secede.

But did He secede? HE DID NOT SECEDE; He never counselled secession; He never implied that it was or could be a duty; He never furnished the faintest countenance to the idea of Dissent. It did occur to the Jews that He might forsake them and go and "teach the Greeks," but it never occurred to Him. He was sent to the lost sheep of Israel, and among them He would live and die. Neither from the National Church, as represented by the temple and its services, nor from the local congregations, the synagogues or parish churches of the Jews, did He withdraw. His example therefore affords a clear demonstration that under no circumstances, or at any rate under none which have ever been known in England, can secession from the Church of God be or have been lawful.

St. John vii. 35. St. Matt. xv. 24.

See below, p. 89.

It is of course true that He "dissented;" that is to say, that He repudiated and denounced and protested against the misbeliefs, the errors, the manifold abuses of that communion of which He was enrolled a member by His circumcision. Why, His ministry was one long and loud protest against them. In every way that He could express His "dissent," He did express it. It is no exaggeration to say that one great department of His life-work was to impeach the corruptions of His age, the corruptions of religion, to expose their hideous deformity, to warn His

disciples against them. To pile up proofs of this from the Holy Gospels would only be to establish what no one denies. It is beyond all question that our Most Sacred Redeemer, our LORD and our GOD dissented, that He passionately and vehemently protested; and it is *as* indisputable that He never separated, never counselled Dissent, but died, as He had lived, a conspicuously conforming member of the communion which scorned Him, rejected Him, persecuted Him, and harried Him to death.

I say, "a conspicuously conforming member," for not only did our Blessed Saviour neither separate from the congregation of Israel Himself nor sanction any sort of separation on the part of His disciples, but He scrupulously and publicly fulfilled all its requirements; He cherished and observed all its institutions, and He expected others to do the same. No "Hebrew of the Hebrews" could have been more completely identified with that communion than He was. Circumcised the eighth day; presented in the temple after three and thirty days more; reappearing in that temple as *Ben Torah*, the "son of law," when He was twelve years of age; listening (and listening too that He might learn) to the doctors of the law—to those same teachers whom He afterwards denounced in such scathing and indignant words, or to men just like them; baptized of John in the Jordan, just like other Jews, that He might "fulfil all righteousness;" frequenting the synagogue every Sabbath-day; reading the lesson there, on one occasion at least; preaching there constantly; resorting to the temple daily; reverencing it so highly—though the religion of the age had made of it a "den of thieves," that He *twice* cleansed its courts of the buyers and sellers, of the sheep and the oxen; so devoured with zeal for it that He would not suffer that any man should

Lev. xii. 3. Ver. 4.

St. Luke ii. 46.

St. Matt. xxiii.

St. Matt. iii. 15. St. Luke iv. 16; St. John xviii. 20. St. Luke iv. 17. St. Matt. xiii. 54; St. Mark vi. 2;

CHAP. V.

carry a vessel through the enclosure; keeping the annual feasts, and even those of human appointment; paying the tribute-money, the half-shekel for the repair of the sanctuary, although, as the Son of the King, He might have claimed exemption; weeping over Jerusalem, the city of solemnities, though it had killed the prophets and was then plotting against His life; joining, as one of the last acts of His earthly ministry, in all the ritual and observances of a Passover feast, even to the successive cups of wine and the singing of the Great *Hallel*—will any one tell us in what ways He could have more thoroughly associated Himself with that economy which was so stained and polluted, and which even then was ready to vanish away?

St. Mark xiv. 49; St. Luke xxi. 37. St. Matt. xxi. 13. St. John ii. 17. St. Mark xi. 16. St. John ii. 13; v. 1; vii. 14, 37; xi. 55. x. 22. Exod. xxx. 13; St. Matt. xvii. 25. xxiii. 37. xxvi. 30.

It cannot be questioned, therefore, either (1) that our Lord did in the most public and emphatic manner possible "dissent" from the manifold abuses of the Jewish Church, or (2) that He did not, by word or deed, directly or indirectly, sanction, much less counsel, "Dissent" from it, or (3) that He most carefully and conspicuously adhered to it and to its manifold institutions. Though the abuses of that communion were so rank that they made it stink even in the nostrils of mankind—so rank that they have made it a byeword to all later ages, and though He knew them all and loathed them all, yet *He never separated;* nor can the least encouragement to separation, the faintest apology for Dissent, be extracted from His august example.

And this identification of our Holy LORD with the corrupt community which then represented the kingdom of GOD upon earth is all the more remarkable when we remember that there was no inherent necessity either that He should join the Jewish Church, or, having joined it, should continue in it

a day longer than He chose. He might have lived as an isolated reformer, of the seed of Abraham indeed, but holding aloof from the church of Abraham. Moreover, He who was "lord of the Sabbath" was also Lord of *all* the institutions of the Jews' religion. The law was given by Moses, but a greater than Moses is here. There was no more necessity, so far as we can see, that He should be circumcised and keep the law than that He should be baptized of John. He submitted to the first as to the second, because it *became* Him to fulfil all righteousness, and if He is our pattern in other respects, in His family, and social, and national relations, then why not in His steadfast conformity to the Church? Why are we to draw the line here, and to say that His continuance in a corrupt communion is not to be imitated.

CHAP. V.

St. Matt. iii. 15.

For He did not (we may add here) permit His disciples to remain in any doubt as to the lesson which His example was meant to teach. His own unswerving and consistent loyalty to the visible Church of His race was enforced by at least one precept which must have made a profound impression on their minds. It is a command which will come before us later on, and which we shall then examine at some length; I will, therefore, do little more than cite it here. St. Matthew tells us that during the last week of His life our Saviour addressed these words to the multitude *and to His disciples:* "The Scribes and Pharisees sit in Moses' seat: *all things therefore whatsoever they bid you, these do and observe,* but do not ye after their works." I do not know that even our Omniscient Lord ever spake more amazing words than these. All through His ministry He had denounced these same Scribes and Pharisees again and again; He proceeds presently to denounce them once

Chap. xxiii. 2.

CHAP. V.

St. Matt. xxiii.

more, and in words which, for their plain speaking and their vehemence, have no parallel, so far as I know, in ancient or modern history. And yet He commands the populace, He commands His own esoteric circle of followers to yield to these very men, "blind guides" and "hypocrites" and "serpents" though they were, a ready and unquestioning obedience. Could anything demonstrate to us more conclusively that *His* way of dealing with perversions of doctrine and with practical abuses in the church was the way of "dissent," and not the barbarous remedy of Dissent? What could He have said more to guard them and us against separation in any form and under any circumstances?

And so we are not surprised to find that, even after the chief priests and scribes had done their worst, even after they had crucified the King of glory, the disciples never faltered for a moment in their allegiance to the communion of which these "children of hell" were the leaders. "They were continually in the temple"—the temple defiled by so many abominations, the temple which their LORD had just left "desolate"—"praising God." A little later we find SS. Peter and John repairing to the temple at the hour of prayer, at the "time of the offering of the evening sacrifice," and every day the Apostles are to be found teaching in its porches. They still keep the feasts; still they frequent the synagogues; even the Apostle of the Gentiles still calls himself a Jew and a Pharisee, still identifies himself with the Jews. Indeed, so little idea had the first Christians of any Dissent from the Hebrew polity and community that a powerful party amongst them strenuously contended for the circumcision even of the Gentiles who had embraced Christianity. The

St. Luke xxiv. 53.

Acts iii. 1. 1 Kings xviii. 36. Acts v. 12, 20, 25, 42. Acts xx. 16; see Gieseler, *Eccles. Hist.* i. 92. *Ibid.* xiii. 5, 14; xiv. 1; xvii. 1; xviii. 4, 19, 26; xxii. 3.

very existence of "Galatianism" in the early Church proves conclusively that the last idea in the minds of Christ's followers, even after the coming of the Holy Ghost and the calling of the Gentiles, was secession. And we find as a matter of fact that they did not secede. St. Paul himself did not secede, much as he denounced the Judaisers, much as he dreaded the effects of their teaching. "The Christian community," says Gieseler, a competent and unprejudiced witness, "*did not renounce* Judaism and the Jewish law, but rather considered themselves to be the society of genuine Israelites." "The community *did not separate itself* from the religion of the Jews;" Christianity was not in any sense a split from Judaism; its first converts did not cease to be Jews when they became Christians. For a long time the two systems existed side by side; the Jewish Christians professed both. They attended the Eucharist and the *Agape;* they also frequented the temple and the synagogue. They observed the first day of the week, but that did not prevent their strict observance of the Sabbath. Down to the time of the destruction of the Jewish temple, when the finger of God put an end to the Hebrew polity, the Christians of Palestine never separated themselves from the religious community of the country. Though that Church remained corrupt in head and members; though it waxed worse and worse by the loss of its best men; though it added to its other crimes that of persecuting the Christians, yet the latter never thought of retaliating by secession. On the contrary, they accounted it a hardship that men separated them from their company and put them out of the synagogues. They would seem to have learned of Christ that Dissent was *never* to be resorted to so long as the Church remained a "church;"

Acts xxiii. 6. xiii. 26; xxiii. 5; xxviii. 17. Acts xv. 1; Gal. v. 2, &c. *Eccles. Hist.* vol. i. 69.

Acts vi. 7; ix. 20; xviii. 8. Acts v. 18; viii. 1; xii. 1.

St. John xvi. 2.

CHAP. V.

that so long as GOD had not left His people, man might not leave it either.

I most earnestly and affectionately commend these considerations, which I venture to say cannot be disproved, to those of our Christian brethren who, often with the purest of motives, often because their conscience[1] seemed to leave them no alternative, have drifted or have rushed into Dissent. If these things are not so, I ask them kindly to say in what particulars I have misrepresented them. If my argument is faulty, then let its weakness be exposed. If it is sound, then I invite them in CHRIST'S name to act upon it. And my argument (it may be well to re-state it in brief) is this:—

1. If Dissent from the Divine community established in any city or country is ever a duty, either because of the perversions of its doctrine, the profligacy of its members, or for any other reason, then Dissent from the Jewish Church was a clear and sacred and imperative duty.[2]

2. Yet the CHRIST of GOD, who knew the abuses and corruptions of Judaism as no other man ever did, and who exposed them as no other man did or could do, HE did not separate Himself or His

[1] "A mistake of conscience doth by no means excuse from sin. Thus, if a man think himself bound to divide the Church by a sinful separation, that separation is nevertheless a sin for him thinking himself bound to do it. For St. Paul thought himself bound to do many things against the Name of JESUS of Nazareth, yet he calls himself a blasphemer and the greatest of sinners for what he did under that obligation of conscience."—Stillingfleet, *Mischief of Separation.*

[2] The *Large Minutes* of Wesleyan Methodism allow that it is "not our duty to separate from the Church because of the wickedness of clergy and people. (1.) Because both priests and people were fully as wicked in the Jewish Church, and yet it was not the duty of the holy Israelites to separate from them. (2.) Neither did our LORD command His disciples to separate from them. He rather counselled the contrary," &c.

disciples from that depraved Church. On the contrary, much as He protested, loudly as He "dissented," He adhered to that corrupt communion, and He required His followers to do the same.

3. If CHRIST is our exemplar—and He *is* our exemplar—if we are to "walk even as He walked," then it may be our duty to "dissent" from the Church of this country, but it can never, never be our duty to separate. For, bad as the Church may be, it never has been, and it is hardly likely that it ever will be, *worse* than that communion from which our LORD did not separate. If the English Church should be worse than the Jewish, its members might then perhaps begin to talk of secession, but not before.

But I shall be told that our Lord's example is no example for us in this one particular. It will be said that the Jewish Church and the Christian, or, in other words, the Church of GOD before CHRIST and the Church after CHRIST, are not exactly on all fours in this matter of secession. We will examine this contention in the next chapter.

CHAPTER VI.

NONCONFORMITY CONTRARY TO THE EXAMPLE OF CHRIST—(continued).

"Voluntary separation from the ordinances of religion in our assemblies is neither commanded by God, nor taught by the Prophets and Apostles . . . . No wicked man is spiritually married unto Christ, nor hypocrite; but hypocrites and wicked men may be members of the societie which in respect of externall covenant is married unto Christ, or else the Church of the Jewes was not beloved of Him."—Ball's *Answer*, Pt. ii. p. 72.

CHAP. VI.

BEFORE we pass from the example of our Gracious LORD to consider His precepts, so far as they bear on the question of Dissent, there are one or two objections alleged against the argument of the preceding chapter which demand our careful attention, and there are also one or two aspects of that example which remain to be considered.

It has been urged, then, that we have not taken into account the essential differences between Judaism and Christianity. "You tell us," they say, "and it is perfectly true, that our Saviour *did not* secede from the church or communion of which He was a member. But you forget to add, what is equally true, that He *could not* separate from it." But I will express this objection in the very words of a thoughtful and amiable Nonconformist who has done me the kindness to read these chapters beforehand, and I quote him because I make no doubt he accurately represents the view of hundreds of his Nonconformist associates. "The services of the

Jewish temple," he says, "were divinely ordered even in their most minute particulars, and there was no authority on earth for altering any of the original regulations. . . . Dissent from such a system was out of the question, and to suppose that this fact makes Dissent from a corrupt church in Christian times a sin is to confound things that are different. . . . Dissent *could not* take place under Judaism."

Now the objection here stated raises two plain questions: first, could the Jew, or could he not, make a division in the Jewish Church, similar to those which Dissenters have made in the Christian congregation? And, secondly, whether he could or could not, could our Saviour CHRIST have divided or seceded from the Church of the Old Covenant? It need hardly be said that the latter is the *essential* question, for it is the example of our LORD that we are considering. What the Jew could or could not do has but a remote bearing on the subject under discussion. Still, it may be well to consider his position, a position in which he was placed by GOD Himself, as it may help us materially to understand the position of CHRIST'S *disciples*, and may contribute something towards a correct answer to the vital question of the position and obligations of our Blessed LORD Himself under the Jewish dispensation.

It is asserted, then, that the Jew could not secede. "Dissent," it is said, "could not take place under Judaism." Let us assume for the moment that this was so; that GOD had so appointed and arranged that first religion and that Old Testament Church, that "Dissent was out of the question." Then, if so, it follows, follows clearly and unmistakably, that it must at least be lawful—I do not now say necessary, but *lawful*—to continue sometimes in a corrupt

CHAP. VI.

communion. I am told that the Jew could not leave his church; could not leave it, however corrupt it might become, and I am further told that Almighty GOD Himself had made it altogether *impossible* for him to leave it. But if so, then it cannot be the will of GOD that men should always separate from a depraved church. We know that such separation has been made, and made repeatedly, because men conceived that GOD'S holy and inexorable will required such a step. But now we are told, and by some of those who have themselves taken this step, that GOD'S will forbade the Jew to secede. He was not even allowed to debate whether separation was right or wrong; he could not withdraw, however much he might desire it. But if the Jew might, nay must, continue in his flagrantly corrupt church; if he was, so to speak, imprisoned in it and fastened down to it by the fiat of GOD, whatever its abuses and errors, then why must the Christian be under exactly opposite conditions, be not only free, but required to come out of it? We are told, I repeat, that the Jew could not leave, and that the Christian, on the contrary, cannot lawfully remain. But if so, we want to know why. For if this is so, then Eternal GOD must have changed His *principles*. In that case, there is no mere alteration of details, of externals, of ordinances; no, but Christianity has made a radical change of front and of morality. What was once right has now become wrong. Of course, it is conceivable that GOD may have given a further revelation of His will in this particular: it may be that the Christian code has altered everything; but if so, we claim to know where this further revelation is to be found? In which of the Gospels, in which of the Epistles are we told that while the Jew could not leave a wicked communion, the Christian must?

We can hardly be expected to believe, without positive proof, that the principles of God's dealings with mankind are so completely reversed. GOD could not have made separation an impossibility for the Jew, and yet account it a crime in the Christian *not* to separate; or if He has done this, He will assuredly have told us. And we can believe that He has done this the less, because Christianity is not a brand-new religion, nor did it profess to upset everything that had gone before: on the contrary, it is built on the foundations of Judaism, and its Founder came, as He expressly told us, "not to destroy the law and the prophets, but to fulfil." Moreover, as He testified to the woman of Samaria, "Salvation is from the Jews." The church after CHRIST is a continuation of the church before CHRIST, and the principles which underlay the latter also underlie the former. We venture to conclude, therefore, in the absence of proof to the contrary, that what was GOD'S will is His will still, and that, as it was imperative for the Jew, so it is lawful for the Christian to abide in GOD'S church until GOD Himself renounces and deserts it.

St. Matt. v. 17.

St. John iv. 22.

But if the Jew could not secede, then a further consequence follows from this fact. It not only follows that the Christian may remain in a corrupt communion, but that he *must not leave it*, so long, at least, as it is no worse than the Jewish church was. It may be—I do not say that it is—that the duty of conformity is less clearly expressed in the New Testament than in the Old; it may be that the Christian is not tied and bound to the church as the Jew was, but even so, he is no more free to depart or to divide the church than was the Jew. He is no more free for this reason—that GOD cannot care less for the unity, for the solidarity of His

CHAP. VI.

covenant people now than under the earlier dispensation; for this reason, too, that whatever changes Christianity has made, it can never have lowered the standard of a virtue—lowered the standard of that very unity which is the spot and mark and characteristic of CHRIST'S followers.[1] It can never be that the Gospel makes less of oneness, of a unity which the world can see and feel, than did the law; nor can it be pretended that an outward and visible union was more necessary for Jews than for Christians. The truth, if anything, lies just the other way, that it is more necessary to Christianity than to Judaism, and that because Christianity has to convert the world. "Union is strength," and a community which has before it the task of regenerating humanity can never have less need of cohesion, of combined and united effort, than one which was practically confined to one race, and had no mission to make converts.

St. John xiii. 35; xvii. 21.

We see, then, that if, as is alleged, the Jew could not divide the Jewish communion, this fact, so far from being a reason why the Christian may, is really a powerful reason why he must not make a breach in the body of CHRIST.

But now the question arises, Was it really the case that "Dissent could not take place under Judaism"? Was "Dissent from such a system out of the question"? The answer is not far to seek. Dissent *did* take place under Judaism. The church of that dispensation *was* divided, just as the Christian church has since been. One separation was made by a descendant of Moses himself; another was made by Jeroboam the son of Nebat. The Jew,

Judg. xviii. 30. R.V. 1 Kings xii. 28.

[1] Our fellowship one with another is regarded by St. John (1 John i. 7) as the natural result of walking in the light; and more, it is "the pledge of a Divine fellowship." See Westcott, *in loc.*

consequently, was just as able to secede as is the Christian.

But perhaps what is meant is that the Jew could not secede without sin. Ah! that is a very different thing. Now at last we find ourselves agreed. The Jew could secede, as Jeroboam did; but he could not secede without sinning, as Jeroboam sinned.

So that we reach the conclusion that to divide the Jewish church, as Dissent has divided the Christian, is distinctly sinful. That schisms in the *Jewish* church were sinful, Nonconformists will allow. With the example of Jeroboam before them—his making Israel to sin is mentioned some four-and-twenty times in the Old Testament—how could they deny it? For the sin of Jeroboam was not *idolatry*: his calves were no more idolatrous than were the colossal cherubim in Solomon's temple, which, it is very probable, suggested them, and of which they were imitations, and the northern kingdom never yielded to idolatries as Judah did. It was not dividing the *kingdom*, for that was expressly ordained of Almighty GOD; it was that he divided, or destroyed the unity of the church. It is this that is so strongly condemned; it was this that brought about the ruin of his house and the destruction of the realm.

See Keil on 1 Kings, ch. xii. *ad fin.*

1 Kings xii. 15, 24. Vers. 27, 28. Chap. xv. 29, 30. 2 Kings xvi. 22, 23.

And here I pause for a moment to ask on what grounds it can be maintained that whilst a schism in the Jewish church was sinful, a secession from the Church of CHRIST may be innocent and even praiseworthy. It is allowed that the Jew could not separate without guilt; then we want to know what has since happened, or in what way the principles of GOD'S dealings under the New Dispensation differ from those of the Old, to make separation from "the church throughout all" England allowable and "expedient" and a "conscientious duty"?

CHAP. VI.

It will, no doubt, be contended that the breach made by Jeroboam was of a wholly different character from the Dissent which has from time to time distracted and weakened the English Church, and I freely admit that his *motives* were widely different from those of many of the apostles of Dissent. They honestly thought they were doing GOD service; he thought only of serving himself. But still I fail to see in what material respects his *action*, his *procedure* differed from theirs. He refused to continue in communion with the ancient and historic Church of GOD—he declined, *i.e.*, to join any longer in acts of worship with Judah and Benjamin. Well, is it or is it not true that Dissenters have done the same? Whatever their reasons and whatever their motives, is it not matter of fact and of history that they have withdrawn from the communion of the English Church, that they have declined to worship any longer in their parish churches? Jeroboam again erected rival sanctuaries: the smoke of his sacrifices at Bethel could be seen from the temple area in Jerusalem. Is it denied that Dissenters have done the same, have built their chapels over against the churches, often in the same street, sometimes just across the road? He "made priests from among all the people which were not of the sons of Levi." And has nothing of the kind happened in Nonconformity? has there not been, that is to say, a distinct repudiation of the parish ministers, and have not the congregations of separatists chosen and commissioned ministers of their own? And, finally, Jeroboam changed the customs which Moses delivered. He devised a feast out of his own heart. To us it seems that Nonconformity has done much the same. It has, in some cases, substituted the shaking of hands for the Apostolic and Scriptural rite of the

laying on of hands; it has rejected the ancient liturgical worship of the church, worship which has descended to us from the Jewish synagogue, for a sort of service supposed to be more conducive to edification; it has degraded the sacraments from the place which they held in the early church, and which they hold too in the teaching of CHRIST, and has put revivals and penitent forms and "conversions" into their room. To us it seems, though we grieve to have to say it, that Dissent in its procedure—I do not speak of its spirit—exactly reproduces the prominent features of that ancient schism.

I earnestly hope that our Nonconformist brethren in CHRIST will not consider it an affront that we should even suggest a parallel between the conduct of Jeroboam and that of the Brownists or Baptists. If they do, though I hasten to assure them that no affront is intended, it is only what Churchmen have themselves had to bear, for Roman Catholics have constantly instituted a comparison between Jeroboam and Henry VIII., between the Jewish schism and the Reformation. I do not know whether Churchmen resented it, but I can affirm that, instead of crying out that they were insulted, they set themselves to prove that the comparison was fallacious; to prove that to reject the extravagant claims of the Papacy and to revert to the doctrines and usages of the first days was a very different thing from withdrawing from the Catholic church, erecting rival altars, and ordaining rival ministers.

But why, let us now ask, was it sinful for the Jew to secede? I venture to think that no other reason can be given than this:—For the same or similar reasons to those which make it sinful for the Christian to divide the Christian church.

It is sometimes assumed that there were special

CHAP. VI.

reasons why the Jew should not become a Dissenter —reasons of race, of ordinances, and statutes. But they will not bear examination. The truth is, that there are special reasons why the Christian should not make a schism, over and above any reasons which can have weighed with a Jew. They lie in the very nature of the Christian religion. No one can pretend, for example, that the "church in the wilderness" was a more sacred and blessed and holy thing than is the communion which was bought with the blood of God; the society which is called the "body" and "bride" of CHRIST; the temple which is "builded together for the habitation of God in the spirit." Why then was it more serious or more sinful to make a schism, such as Jeroboam made, in the church of the Old Covenant than to make divisions, such as Dissent has made, in the church of the New? Is the New Covenant in any respect inferior to the Old; above all, does it attach less importance to union and concord? I affirm that every consideration points the other way. Did that Jewish Church in its assemblies, let me ask, enjoy the Gracious Presence vouchsafed to every Christian congregation, even of two or three? You tell me "No," and yet you say it was a worse thing to divide it than to divide the twos or threes. In other words, men may break up the august society of CHRIST into any number of wrangling denominations, and yet it was deadly sin to divide the church of Abraham and Moses into *two*. And this, too, when it was the express design of Christianity to *unite* men, to make them "brethren," to "gather together *into one* the children of God that are scattered abroad," to collect them into "one flock" under "one shepherd;" this, when it preaches peace and amity and brotherly love, as Judaism neither did nor could do; this, when the

Acts xx. 28. Ephes. v. 23–30. Ephes. ii. 22.

St. Matt. xviii. 20.

St. John xi. 52. Chap. x. 16.

members of the Christian society form "one body" —a body, too, which is compared to the one human body, and to divide which is to divide CHRIST. It is clear, then, that whatever the differences between Christianity and Judaism were, and we neither overlook nor minimise those differences, but whatever they were, they cannot be of such a character as to make a schism less sinful now than it was in an earlier and darker age: they cannot in the nature of things be such as to make a breach in the body of CHRIST less serious and less sinful than was a separation from the commonwealth of Israel.

1 Cor. xii. Chap. i. 13.

So that in this matter of schism, Jew and Christian stand on a similar footing. Each could make a *dichostasy* (the word used in Rom. xvi. 17, 1 Cor. iii. 3, and Gal. v. 20) or *separation* in the Church, but neither could make it without sin, and the sin of making a division amongst Christians, the members of CHRIST'S body, must be so much the more sinful than the sin of Jeroboam as Christianity is more holy and lofty and spiritual and illuminating than Judaism was.

But now let us turn to our second question. We have seen that the Jew could and did secede from communion with other Israelites. But what of our Saviour CHRIST? Must the same—with reverence—be said of Him, that He could not have seceded without sin? That He *could* secede we know, because Jeroboam seceded. But would secession in His case (assuming that it could have taken place) have been as unjustifiable as in other cases? We know that He could not do wrong: are we to conclude that in His case "Dissent was out of the question"?

Now I do not know that we could desire a more decisive proof that secession, under any such circum-

CHAP. VI.

stances as have existed in England within the last three hundred years, is against the will of GOD than the fact, if fact it is, that even our Holy LORD could not, or could not lawfully, withdraw from the Jewish church, in spite of its manifold corruptions. For if it was impossible, or if it would have been wrong for Him to make a schism then, how can it be right for us to make one now just because we can make it? But this is a weapon which, though it is put into our hands, we are not able to use. It is not the fact that the Son of Man could not separate.

I have anticipated this question, and, indeed, have partly answered it above on p. 73. I have there remarked that there can have been no inherent necessity, either that our LORD should become a member of the Jewish church, or, having so become, should—except for our sakes, for His work's sake and example's sake—continue therein a day longer than He pleased. I proceed to say that what others could not do without sin, He could. He could not, of course, alter the laws of right and wrong: He could not change one jot or one tittle of the moral law; but He could, and He alone could, alter "positive" institutions and ordinances. He tells us Himself that He was "Lord of the Sabbath," the Sabbath which was ordained of God in the tables of the covenant. But if so, He was equally Lord of all the institutions of Judaism—of everything that was *positive*, as distinguished from *moral*[1]—and therefore of the *church* among the rest. I do not think that Nonconformists will seriously dispute this, for

[1] "*Moral* precepts are precepts the reasons of which we see: *positive* precepts are precepts the reasons of which we do not see. Moral *duties* arise out of the nature of the case itself prior to external command. Positive *duties* do not arise out of the nature of the case, but from external command."—Butler, *Analogy*, Part ii. ch. i.

it follows from the belief in our LORD'S divinity. They will hardly deny to the Word and Wisdom of GOD, by Whom all things were made, and in Whom all things consist, the power to stand apart from a system which was honeycombed with corruption, and which was destined shortly to disappear—to be practically superseded by Christianity. But we will not quarrel over this question. I shall assume that it is denied. For the sake of argument, I will admit, if necessary, that even our LORD CHRIST could not have deserted the temple, its feasts and its solemnities, without contradicting the revealed will of GOD. *But the same cannot be said of the synagogues, the parish churches of the Jews.* They, at any rate, were of purely human institution: they were in no sense ordained of God. It is impossible to deny that our Redeemer could have deserted these had He so pleased; that He could also have withdrawn His disciples; that He could have forbidden them ever to enter either synagogue or Rabbinic school; and finally, that He could have established rival synagogues of His own. Yes, and as little can it be denied that this is what He ought to have done and would have done on Dissenting principles: he must have done this, had secession been the duty which our English Nonconformists have understood it to be. They have justified their separation from our parish churches, they have defended the "gathering of churches," of rival congregations, on grounds of conscience: they said their conscience forbade them to remain. They say so still.[1] But our Redeemer's conscience cannot have been less sensitive or less enlightened than

St. John i. 3. Col. i. 17.

[1] "Although, from strong conscientious convictions, they [Congregationalists] could not unite with them [Churchmen] in the same organisation, yet they did unite with them in spirit."—Rev. Dr. Bruce, *Leeds Mercury*, April 6, 1892.

CHAP. VI.

St. Matt. vi. 2, 5; xxiii. 6, 34; Acts vi. 9; ix. 2.

theirs, and yet He remained. He never withdrew from the synagogues of Palestine, though—and this is a material point—it was round these that the abuses of Judaism principally clustered. It was not in the temple service, but in the synagogues and schools, that the law was made void by traditionalism. It is noticeable that our LORD never denounces the priests or Levites, though the chief priests were His sworn foes, for it was not by the priests (who had nothing to do with preaching), but by the scribes and doctors of the law that Judaism had been so shamefully depraved. The temple service had undergone little or no change, for the Rabbis had no footing there; it was outside the court of the priests that the great mischief had been wrought, in the expositions of the synagogues, in the dialectics of the scribes.[1] There was little need for our LORD to protest against the services or the ministers of the great national sanctuary, still less to separate from *them;* his protest must be addressed, and it was addressed, to the teachers of the town and village congregations. It is, therefore, almost idle to consider whether our LORD could or could not separate Himself from the temple worship. There was little need for Him to do anything of the kind, but there was every reason why He should withdraw from the synagogues—if, that is to say, conscience, or GOD'S law, requires men to withdraw from congregations the teachers of which are hypocritical and the doctrines of which overthrow the Word of GOD. And this was the more necessary as the synagogue represented, to a much greater degree than the temple

St. Luke iv. 21; Acts xiii. 15.

[1] I do not mean to say that the priests were exemplary—far from it—or that they did not join hands with the Rabbis. I mean that they were not the *fons et origo mali.* The degradation of Judaism proceeded from the doctors of the law.

could possibly do, the religious life of the Jews of His day. Attendance at the temple was very occasional: even with devout Jews it was often limited to the feast of the Passover, but the synagogue claimed their presence every day of the year. If, therefore, separation is ever a duty, our sacred LORD should have publicly and openly disowned and denounced the synagogues of the Jews. But He never did: on the contrary, as everybody knows, He attended them constantly, read in them, preached in them. Though the rulers were sometimes hostile; though the congregations were sometimes incensed at His teaching—on one occasion they rushed from their prayers to attempt His life; though He foresaw that the synagogues would scourge and abuse and ostracise His disciples, yet He never withdrew, and He neither counselled nor permitted His disciples to withdraw. Though they were threatened with excommunication, with being "put out of the synagogue," yet still He did not separate. Nor did His disciples withdraw after His Ascension, a circumstance which shows clearly how they interpreted His will. So that the example of our LORD is still clear and decisive against separation, against all separation from our parish synagogues—and it may be remembered here that St. James calls a Christian congregation a "synagogue," and that our churches are, as are some of their services, the lineal descendants of the synagogue, of its psalms and lessons and prayers, no less than of the temple and some of its offices. Even if we allow, therefore, that He could not have forsaken the temple and the sacrifices and the feasts, no one can pretend that Dissent from the synagogues was "out of the question:" no one can dispute that our Saviour ought to have, and would have seceded, if secession from evil teachers

St. Luke ii. 41; *cf.* 1 Sam. i. 3; ii. 19.

St. Matt. iv. 23; xiii. 54; St. Luke iv. 16; St. John xviii. 20, &c. St. Luke xiii. 14. Chap. iv. 28. St. Matt. x. 17; St. Luke xxi. 12; St. John xvi. 2; *cf.* Acts xxii. 19. St. John ix. 22; xii. 42. Acts ix. 20; xiii. 14; xiv. 1; xvii. 1; xviii. 4, 26, &c. St. James ii. 2.

CHAP. VI.

and corrupt congregations is ever a Christian duty.

And for the argument in this shape I bespeak the especial and impartial consideration of Congregationalists. It is their contention that the Church of CHRIST is entirely unlike the national church of this land, and, I may add, the national church of the Jews. According to their views, there is no other church than the individual congregation, or possibly all the congregations of a city. They might allow —some of them would—that the whole company of Christians in a city, say in London, form a church, but not the company of Christians throughout England. They might plead, consequently, that our LORD'S continuance in the national church of His race has no bearing on the question of secession from a Christian congregation. But they cannot say this of His attendance at the synagogues. According to them, churches are what synagogues once were; some of them, I believe, allow that the church has grown out of the synagogue. To them, then, in particular, but also to all other Nonconformists, I submit that there is no escape from the following argument—I recapitulate it in order to avoid all misconception:—

St. James ii. 2.

1. Whatever imperfections, errors, or abuses there are, or have been, in the synagogues or parish congregations of England since the date of the Reformation, no one affirms that they are more or worse than those which existed in the synagogues or local congregations of our Saviour's day. Our synagogues have not been worse than those of the Jews, either in respect of the character of the officiating ministers or in respect of the complexion of the congregations —their moral and religious *status*—or in respect of the doctrines taught or the deeds done therein.

2. Our Most Gracious LORD, "the effulgence of the Father's glory and the express image of His substance," who has left us an example that we should follow His steps and should walk even as He walked, knew of all the errors, misdeeds, and corruptions both of the synagogues and their teachers; He knew them and He denounced them, but He never separated from them; He neither withdrew Himself nor did He instruct His disciples to withdraw.

Heb. i. 3. 1 Peter ii. 21; 1 John ii. 6.

3. If our LORD and His followers, both Apostles and disciples, could not only conscientiously attend the synagogues of their day, notwithstanding their corruptions, but could take a prominent part in their services, then English Christians *may* attend the parish churches of their country, and *must* attend them unless they set up for being wiser or holier than their LORD. To separate from the parish church on conscientious grounds when He and His loyally adhered to the synagogue is to reflect on His conscience and theirs; it is to impugn His wisdom; it is to contemn His example.

In fact, what we want, and what we respectfully ask our Nonconformist brethren to furnish, is a plain answer to this question: *On what grounds can separation from our parish churches be justified, when the Christ of God did not withdraw from the synagogues of the Jews?* It should admit of a ready answer; we shall await it with profound interest.

But it is of no use to allege—I now come to another objection which has been already raised—that the time was so short before Judaism was to be altogether abrogated by Christianity, that it was hardly worth while to separate. For, plainly, if the will of GOD requires men publicly to renounce a communion which is penetrated with abuses and false doctrine, to renounce it either for our own

CHAP. VI.

soul's sake, or for the world's sake, as a testimony against it, as a practical disclaimer of all complicity with its errors and evil deeds, or for any other reason, then it must be a duty to take this step *at once*. If it is sinful to remain in such a society, then it is sinful to remain for a single day, for a day after the duty of Dissent is clear. St. Paul tells us that he
Gal. ii. 5. would not give place to Judaising teachers, "no, not for an hour." We cannot believe that our LORD was less jealous for the truth, less impatient of error, than was his Apostle. Nor is it any answer, again, to tell us that our LORD, inasmuch as He was GOD, could do what we may not dare to do. That is quite true, but it is no explanation of His attitude, either to the temple or the synagogue. For even if this explains His continuance in the Jewish church, what about His disciples? They were men of like passions with ourselves. If our Saviour might remain, they must leave it (if, that is to say, secession is a duty). But they did not leave it, either during His earthly life, or after His departure. Nor does this contention, again, take the influence of our LORD'S example into account. If He might continue in a corrupt church, others might not, without compromising the truth and imperilling their souls. But seeing that He remained, they would inevitably do the same, as in fact they did. He could not attend either sacrifice or school without encouraging others to do the same. On all these grounds, therefore, I respectfully submit that Nonconformity is contrary to and is condemned by the example of JESUS CHRIST.

CHAPTER VII.

NONCONFORMITY CONTRARY TO THE PRECEPTS OF CHRIST.

"It is not by the mere practice of the primitive Churches that we profess to be ruled, even in matters of polity, but by the law of Christ Himself. What Evangelists and Apostles have told us of Him is not enough. We must tell the world from His own lips."—Dr. Dale, *Christ and the Controversies of Christendom.*

BUT it is not only by His *example* that "our Master and only Saviour JESUS CHRIST" speaks to us on the subject of Dissent; His example is fortified and explained by His precepts. For (passing by much of His teaching,[1] for the sake of brevity) one at least of His precepts is decisive—yes, absolutely decisive, against all separation from the Church of GOD, at least on the ground of the evil lives or corrupt teaching either of its ministers or of its members. No man who "wills to do His will" can, in the teeth of that imperative instruction, secede from the Church of this or any country because the clergy are sometimes unspiritual or immoral men, or because their doctrines are supposed to be unsound, or because the lay members consist of bad men as well as good; and those who have so seceded, and their name is legion, have done it in defiance or in ignorance of His plain prohibition.

I have already observed that perhaps there is not a single utterance of our Redeemer more startling

[1] See p. 170 below.

CHAP. VII.

than that which is recorded in St. Matt. xxiii. 1–3. And I feel sure that a consideration of the circumstances under which it was spoken and of the characters with which it deals, will bring the candid reader to the same conclusion.

I begin by remarking—what no one will dispute—that our Blessed Lord had no more inveterate enemies than the scribes and the Pharisees. *Why* this was the case it is needless to inquire: that is sufficiently obvious, and it makes no difference to argument. The fact remains the same, that all through His ministry they followed and denounced and persecuted Him and thirsted for His blood. Of this abundant evidence will be found in St. Luke v. 17, 30; vi. 7; xi. 53; xv. 2; xx. 1, 19; xxii. 2; xxiii. 10—for the sake of brevity I confine my quotations to one Gospel only. But their enmity—their murderous hate, I should rather say—blazed forth with unexampled fury during that last week of our Lord's life. Their object was to "entangle Him in His talk;" to make Him compromise Himself either with the people or the Roman governor. We know that it was all in vain; we know how, one after another, He put them to silence, and we learn from St. Matt. xxii. 46, the verse which immediately precedes this precept, how He finally and publicly confuted them, so that "no man from that day forth durst ask Him any more questions." And what next? The next thing we read is that our LORD claims for these same scribes and Pharisees, these plotters against His life, these teachers whom He had publicly silenced and discredited, He claims for them the ready and almost unquestioning obedience of the Jewish people. It was *then* that He said "to the multitudes and to His disciples"—"*The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat;* ALL THINGS, THEREFORE, WHATSOEVER

St. Matt. xxi. 45; xxii. 22, 34.

St. Matt. xxiii. 2, 3.

THY BID YOU, THESE OBSERVE AND DO, *but do ye not after their works, for they say and do not.*"

In other words, the Infinite Wisdom, the Teacher who spake as never man spake, the WORD OF GOD, He told the multitudes—yes, and He told His disciples, He made His Apostles understand that this was a message for them, and not for unconverted Jews alone—that whatsoever the Pharisees bade them to observe, that even they, His followers though they were, were to "observe and to do." They were not to *imitate* them, they were by no means to act as they acted; on the contrary, they were to beware of them, and above all, of their hypocrisy; but they were to attend to their teaching; they were to receive meekly their instructions and exhortations; they were to obey implicitly their injunctions. They were not to pick and choose amongst these; they were to obey them all, first and last. "*All things whatsoever*" the scribes taught them out of the law of Moses;[1] whatsoever they enjoined as resting on the revelation embodied in the Pentateuch, this even CHRIST'S disciples were to observe. The law was shortly to be fulfilled; it was to make way for a new and better dispensation: it was even then "ready to vanish away," but so long as it lasted, so long were the interpretations and precepts of its recognised expounders to be fully and uncomplainingly obeyed. The LORD, who Himself fulfilled all righteousness, who observed all innocent ordinances (unnecessary as they all were for Him), here charges His disciples to do the same.

See ver. 1.

St. Luke xx. 46. *Ibid.* xii. 1.

St. Matt. iii. 15.

But what (let us now ask), what were these scribes and Pharisees, for whose instructions our LORD claims

[1] "It was an admitted Rabbinic principle that no Halakhah (traditional law) might contradict Scripture."—Edersheim, *Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah.*

CHAP. VII.

such implicit obedience?[1] What sort of character did they bear? what did our Saviour Himself think and say about them, for "He knew what was in man," and He cannot have been deceived?

Now, it is very remarkable that no sooner has our Most Sacred LORD claimed for the scribe and the Pharisee (whom he had just shamed and silenced) the reverent attention and the ready and hearty submission of His own followers—followers whom these same scribes and Pharisees would presently persecute and slay, as they slew Him—than He deliberately pronounces the most scathing and unsparing condemnation of their character and conduct. Never since the world was has such an indictment been brought against any class of men as our gentle and merciful Redeemer then brought against them. Search where you will, there is no page in any book to compare with this 23rd chapter of St. Matthew's Gospel, in respect of passionate and indignant reproaches. Seven times does He pronounce a solemn "woe" against them, and these "woes" are the more significant when we remember that out of the same lips proceeded the eight beatitudes. Having described some of their hypocrisies in the 4th and following verses, he begins in the 13th to call them "hypocrites" to their face. He does it again in the 15th verse, and again in the 16th, 23rd, 25th,

St. Luke xxii. 66; St. Matt. xxvii. 62.

St. Matt. v. 1–11.

[1] "He [the scribe] has been solemnly ordained with the laying on of hands, and is the 'Rabbi,' 'My great one,' *amplitudo*. . . . He is the exegete of the law, the teacher of the law (Jos. *Antiq.*, xvii. 6, 2). Although generally appearing in the company of the Pharisees, he is not necessarily one of them, for they represent a religious party whilst he has a status and holds an office. Such was to be the honour paid to their sayings, that they were to be absolutely believed even if they were to declare that to be of the right hand which was of the left or *vice versa* (*Siphré* on Deut. p. 105 *a*)."—Edersheim, vol. i. p. 94.

27th, and 29th verses, and each time He gives us some glaring instance of their hypocrisy. And if we would understand what this charge of "hypocrisy" implies on His sacred lips, let us remember for a moment those suggestive words which we find in the 51st verse of the next chapter—"The LORD of that servant . . . shall cut him asunder and appoint His portion *with the hypocrites!*" And why "with the hypocrites"? Because their damnation was sure: their place was the very lowest in the realm of hell. The scribes and Pharisees, then, were "hypocrites"—seven times He hurls this charge against them. But that is not all: that is a mild word compared with some of the rest. In the 15th verse He describes them as "children of hell," for He says they made their proselytes twofold more the children of hell *than themselves.* In the 16th verse He denounces them as "blind guides," and in the 17th verse as "fools and blind"—these very teachers whom He has just charged His disciples to hear and obey! He calls them "blind guides" again in the 24th verse. "Thou blind Pharisee!"—this is His language in verse 26. In the 27th verse He compares them to "whited sepulchres;" to tombs, charnel-houses, the exterior all fair and clean and seemly, but within "full of dead men's bones and of all uncleanness." In the 31st verse they are represented as the sons and imitators of murderers—they were even then plotting to murder the CHRIST of GOD—sons of the men who had slain GOD's prophets. And the denunciations reach their climax in the 33rd verse, "Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how shall ye escape the judgment of hell?" All this, and more than this, our Master CHRIST said of the very men of whom He had decreed just before, "All things whatsoever they bid you observe, these

CHAP. VII.

observe and do." Yes, whatsoever the "hypocrites," the "fools," the "blind guides," the "whited sepulchres," the "murderers," the "vipers," the "serpents," sitting in Moses' chair, charged them to do, they were to do it, unquestioningly.

Now, why was this? What reason can we assign for so hard a saying? On what principle can it be contended that teachers, whose example is to be shunned and loathed, are nevertheless to be cheerfully and implicitly obeyed?

Our LORD has left us in no doubt on that score. He has furnished the reason Himself, and it is a very simple one. "The scribes and Pharisees *sit in Moses' seat. Therefore*, whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do." They are not to be listened to because of their *characters*—quite the contrary; they are to be obeyed because of their *office*.[1] They had an official position; they were the successors of Moses; they stood in his shoes; therefore their teachings were to be treated with respect; therefore their precepts and expositions were to be received with unresisting compliance.

And it may not be improper to remember here that there were at this time—who can doubt it?—many upright and excellent men in Palestine. We meet some such, accidentally as it were, in Bible story. Such were Zacharias the priest, Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, Joseph who was surnamed Justus, and the like. The Essenes, again, bore a high character, and some of them, we can hardly doubt, deserved it. Yet we never find our LORD counselling either the multitude or His disciples to listen to *them* and to

St. Luke i. 6.
St. John i. 47.
Acts i. 23.

[1] "There was no principle more firmly established by universal consent than that *authoritative* teaching required previous authorisation. . . . All teaching must be authoritative, since it was traditional."—Edersheim, vol. ii. p. 381.

do *their* bidding. He never said, "These are just men and holy: these are no hypocrites, no vipers, they fear God and work righteousness; in their hands you will be safe: all things, therefore, whatsoever they bid you, these observe and do." No, He bids His disciples obey the hypocrites, the vipers; they are actually to follow the "blind guides"—and just because these did, and the other did not, "sit in Moses' seat." It is not a question of character; it is a question of office, of appointment.

But now the question arises, what is meant by sitting in the seat of Moses? This, too, admits of a ready answer. Moses was not only the lawgiver; he was the exponent and interpreter of the law. If any question of law arose, if any breach of law was alleged, it was brought to him for judgment. He "made them know the statutes of God and His laws." The law which was given by Moses was, as long as he lived, expounded by him. His chair was that of the teacher. The very words "Moses' *seat*" almost suggest to us that the function here referred to is that of the Rabbi, the expounder of the law, for amongst the Jews of our Saviour's day the doctor of the law *sate* on a lofty chair, whilst his pupils literally sate at his feet.[1] So that the "chair of Moses" would convey to the multitudes who heard our LORD the idea of his teaching office. As law-*giver*, he was without successor; as law-*expounder*, he had been succeeded by the scribes and the Pharisees.

Exod. xviii. 13. Ver. 16. St. John i. 17.

Cf. St. Matt. xxvi. 55; St. Luke iv. 20; v. 3; St. John viii. 2. St. Luke x. 39; Acts iv. 35; v. 2; xxii. 3. St. John i. 17; vii. 19. Exod. xviii. 25-27; Deut. i. 13-17.

Now, *how* the scribes came to occupy "Moses' seat" is not altogether clear. Possibly they were the lineal representatives of those "rulers" and "judges" whom Moses associated with himself in the exposition and administration of the law of the

[1] "Among the Rabbis, the successor of a Rabbi is spoken of as the occupant of his chair."—Vitringa.

CHAP. VII.

chosen people, those judges who are called "gods;" possibly, too, they owed some of their prominence, if not their authority, to the important part which, at a crisis in the nation's history, had been sustained by "Ezra the scribe," whom we see in the sacred narrative actually sitting in Moses' chair, when from his pulpit (or *tower*) of wood he read the law from morning until mid-day, and he and his assistants "*gave the sense* and caused the people to understand the reading." Even the priests and the Levites, we are told, "assembled unto Ezra *the scribe*," to "give attention to the words of the law." But whatever the origin of the scribes, and by what means soever they came to occupy the chair of Moses, we have it on the authority of our LORD Himself that they did occupy it. He who had sent unto the Hebrews "prophets and wise men" also as, singularly enough, we read in this very chapter, sent unto them *scribes*. They too had a "Divine legation," no less than the lawgiver. It was now their office, as it had been his, to make men know "the statutes of GOD and His laws." We may be altogether unable to trace the history of this new order; we may fail to see how they gained their authority, but the fact remains that at the time of our LORD'S ministry they were the recognised, and more, the authorised doctors of the law. This is the very reason which our Saviour assigns for the injunction we are now considering. It was because of their *official* position, because they were the successors of Moses, and for that reason alone, that they were to be obeyed.

Exod. xxii. 28.

Nehem. viii. 3, 4, 8.

Ver. 13.

St. Matt. xxiii. 34.

And this mention of "doctors of the law" reminds us of a very significant incident in our LORD'S life; it reminds us that what He here counselled His disciples to do, He had done Himself. *He* had listened to the "blind guides" in His time. At His first

appearance in the temple, when He became *Ben Torah*, a "son of the law," we find him "sitting in the midst of the doctors, both *hearing them and asking them questions*." Yet those same doctors must even then have been hypocritical and corrupt. They cannot have entirely changed their character within twenty years. "No man becomes base all at once," and still less a whole and a large *class* of men. What the scribes and Pharisees were at the close of our LORD'S ministry, that they were substantially when He was twelve years of age. Yet He listened to them, and listened to learn from them. Even then they must have been for the most part—no doubt there were some notable exceptions—"fools and blind;" even then "serpents" and "vipers" and "children of hell." Yet the Son of GOD, the Truth Incarnate, gave them audience, and desired to be taught by them. The precept we are considering, consequently, He confirmed by His example. That He should have charged His followers to observe and do whatsoever the scribes and Pharisees enjoined, is hardly more remarkable than that He should, even on a single occasion, have listened to them Himself. I hardly know which is the more startling, His example or His precept. Each is equally opposed to many of our most deeply rooted ideas and conceptions at the present day.[1] *We* think we compromise ourselves by giving any heed to ungodly pastors; we think we run the gravest risks by listening to "blind guides." Yet the CHRIST, the One Infallible Teacher of our race, He taught men to listen to such, because of the official position which they occupied, and He listened, patiently and respectfully, to such men Himself.

St. Luke ii. 46.

[1] "I cannot come to your Church because . . . you have a false and anti-Christian ministry."—*Examination of Barrowe*, &c., 1593.

CHAP. VII.

Now let us see how all this bears on the question we are considering, viz., the attention due to unworthy pastors and teachers. And, first, let us remember—

1. *The clergy are always unworthy, always stained by infirmities, imperfections, and sins.* For, whatever ordination does for them, it does not destroy their human nature; it does not slay the old Adam. They are men of like passions with other men after ordination no less than before. When from members of the church they become officers, they do not leave all their evil and corrupt affections behind them. Nor do they escape their temptations; indeed, they then begin to encounter temptations of a more subtle and insidious kind. The bishop, priest, or deacon finds himself the day after consecration or ordination with the same treacherous and deceitful heart which he had the day before, the same frailties and weaknesses, the same besetting sins; and with all this he has *additional* temptations and besetments, the temptations peculiar to his calling. He is not going to lead a charmed life because of the grace of orders; still he must watch and pray, still fight and struggle, and still he may fall. And sometimes he does fall; perhaps he "falls seven times a day." He is no more exempt from sins than those to whom he ministers. Every week, if not every day, priest and bishop proclaim themselves "miserable sinners," and it is no figure of speech; it is the simple truth. And they have sins too of which they are never suspected. Whatever faults are imputed to them, it is certain that they have other and perhaps graver faults, unknown to man. It often happens, says a great divine (Bengel), that when men are praising a minister of CHRIST for the faithful discharge of one part of his duty, GOD is secretly chiding him for the neglect of another part. And these unseen, unsuspected sins

Prov. xxiv. 16.

are often the blackest. The world thinks it all right so long as a clergyman avoids *scandals*—sins which are patent and notorious, "murders, revellings, drunkenness, and such like:" it takes no account of envyings, and pride, and self-conceit, and jealousy—sins to which the clergy, yes, and "ministers of all denominations," are especially obnoxious; and yet these latter are perhaps more detestable, more heinous in the sight of GOD. It is curious how Dissenters will fasten on the parson's fox-hunting or dancing, or even smoking, whilst they reckon the preacher's swagger or pomposity or unctuousness as mere weaknesses. According to the proverb, they "pardon the ravens and censure the doves."[1] Yes, all the clergy are stained with sins. And all are unworthy—unworthy of the high and sacred trust committed to their charge. They must say, no less than other communicants, "We are not worthy so much as to gather up the crumbs under Thy table." We sometimes speak as if an "unworthy priest" were a strange phenomenon, when there is none worthy, no, not one. It is always a question of degree—of more or less unworthiness. Who can pretend that he is good enough to be GOD'S ambassador; that he is fit to be a steward of His mysteries? And the more men know of themselves and of human nature, the more clear will they be that all the clergy are unworthy, the more prepared for errors and imperfections. And just as the moral and religious character of the Church's officers is invariably imperfect, so also is their *teaching*. It must be imperfect, if it is not actually erroneous. As they only know in part, so they can only prophesy in part. If they understood all mysteries and possessed all knowledge, it might

Gal. v. 21.

[1] *Dat veniam corvis, vexat censura columbas.*

CHAP. VII.

be different, but they are very far from doing either the one or the other. We have only to read the sermons and expositions of a past age to discover how much future generations will discard or qualify in our own teaching; nay, we have only to remember the discordant opinions uttered in the pulpits of the present day to be convinced that they cannot all be right, not even the most dogmatic and oracular of them, nor may we altogether forget the congregations which "*suffer* the word of exhortation." Of the doctrines of the clergy no less than of their lives, the verdict must always be, "We have this treasure in
2 Cor. iv. 7. earthen vessels." But let us now proceed to a second consideration.

2. *However sinful and unworthy of their office the clergy may be, they are certainly not worse than the scribes, nor has their teaching been worse, within the last three hundred years, than that of the scribes.* I know that many Englishmen, and especially many Nonconformists, have a poor opinion of the clergy as a class. I know, too, that many Churchmen think very meanly of their own parish priest in particular, and not always without good reasons. But I am sure neither the one nor the other would pretend that the clergy of the Church, even at its darkest period, were anything like the scribes and Pharisees. No one would say that *as a class* they were "hypocrites," "children of hell," "serpents," and "vipers." "Blind guides" they may consider them to be, but not murderers. I do not think they would say that our bishops and curates are in anything like the same category with the men against whom this terrible indictment is brought; but even if they are, everybody will allow—and this is all my argument requires—that *they are no worse.*

3. *The clergy now sit in Moses' seat; they sit in the*

Apostles' seat; they sit (I say it with reverence) *in* CHRIST'S *seat.* I say they sit in Moses' seat; for so long as the books of Moses form a part of Holy Scripture, so long will these books need interpreters. And the law is not destroyed; it is only fulfilled. The gifts of GOD are without repentance; the law once given is the eternal possession of mankind. Nothing that GOD has once used for the education and discipline of our race can ever be indifferent to us, or without its lessons for us. The books of the law are not only historic records of a past dispensation; they are still, whatever their origin, a living part of GOD'S revelation to man. Who, then, is to interpret their teaching? Shall we look to the Rabbis of to-day, the successors of the scribes, for this service? How can we when they have not the key to unlock their meaning? when "unto this day, wheresoever Moses is read, a veil lieth upon their heart;" how can we when those books speak to us everywhere of Christ?[1] In type and symbol and prophecy they preach CHRIST and Him crucified. No, the Rabbis sit in Moses' seat no longer. Since our LORD fulfilled the law, no fruit has grown thenceforward on the barren stock of Judaism. Others have taken their bishopric, and Moses hath now in every *church* them that preach him. His chair is not vacant; it is occupied by the "ministers of the new covenant." But not only do these sit in Moses' seat; they also sit in the Apostles' seat. Nobody contends that they have inherited *all* the powers and functions of the Apostles, any more than the scribes inherited all the authority of Moses. Even Ezra did not succeed Moses as lawgiver, but he did succeed him as the doctor and expounder of the law. Precisely so

St. Matt. v. 17.

2 Cor. iii. 15.

St. Luke xxiv. 27, 44.

St. Matt. xxi. 19.

Acts. xv. 21.

[1] *In Vetere Testamento Novum latet.*

CHAP. VII.

the clergy succeed the Apostles, not in their miraculous powers or gifts of inspiration, but in their teaching office. What the Apostles were, they are —"ministers of CHRIST and stewards of the mysteries
1 Cor. iv. 1. of GOD;" what the Apostles did, they do—they expound the law of CHRIST. No thoughtful Christian will deny this. He could hardly be so perverse as to maintain that, whilst the scribes sate in Moses' seat, the Apostles' seat is empty; he will hardly say, whatever his views of Apostolic Succession[1] may be, that the first preachers of our religion have no successors at all. If the scribes occupied the chair of Moses, why should not the clergy, in precisely the same way, so far and no farther, occupy the stool of the Apostles?[2] Whichever way we regard their office, it can hardly be maintained that their position

[1] It is curious how Nonconformists, much as they rail at every form of this doctrine (which only means that "the same rule holds good in the Christian Church as in every well-ordered secular government, namely, that officers cannot appoint themselves, but must derive their commission from the supreme central authority or from persons empowered thereby"), no sooner crystallise into a "church" than they establish and rigidly maintain a succession of their own. To take one example, —the Wesleyans, whose ministry is based on the repudiation of Apostolic succession, nevertheless stoutly maintain that no man is a Wesleyan minister who has not been appointed in the Wesleyan succession, *i.e.*, by Wesleyan ministers and with Wesleyan rites. And if a clergyman were to claim to occupy their pulpits on the ground that he too was CHRIST'S minister, or if a Methodist "layman" were to appeal to his piety or success to prove his ministerial standing, they would forthwith be confronted and silenced with a very real doctrine of Ministerial Succession. They would be asked who sent them into the Wesleyan ministry and when?

[2] It has been suggested to me that by comparing the clergy to the scribes, I may lay myself open to the odious retort that they merit the denunciations which our Saviour hurled at the scribes. But no Dissenter worthy of the least respect could descend to such abuse; it would only betray an abject poverty of argument. Similarity of *office* does not involve resemblance in *character*.

is inferior to that of the scribes. They have "an unction of the Holy One," which the scribes had not. Like the scribes[1] they have been set apart by the laying on of hands, and, unlike the scribes, they have received through that rite a "gift of GOD." Either the clergy sit in the Apostles' seat, or Christianity has no "pastors and teachers" at all. But we must go one step farther; we must say, because the truth requires us to say it, that they sit in CHRIST'S seat. It is no blasphemy to say that. All unique as is the glory and office of our LORD, there are those who have succeeded Him, at an infinite distance, in His *prophetic* office;[2] they have succeeded Him, as the scribes succeeded Moses, as interpreters of GOD'S law, as teachers of mankind. He said Himself, "As My Father sent Me, even so send I you." He also said, "He that receiveth you, receiveth Me," and St. Paul affirms that ministers are "ambassadors for CHRIST," and pray men "in CHRIST'S stead," and he does not hesitate to write of CHRIST speaking in him. We are, therefore, warranted in saying that in the sense in which the scribes sate in Moses' seat, *in that sense* do the clergy sit in the Apostles' seat and in the chair of our Adorable LORD.[3] They may not add to His teaching; they must not take aught from it, but they may and they must echo and expound it.

1 Tim. iv. 14; 2 Tim. i. 6.

St. John xx. 21. St. Matt. x. 40; St. Luke x. 16. 2 Cor. v. 20. 2 Cor. xiii. 3; cf. St. Matt. x. 20.

And so we reach the conclusion to which the fore-

[1] "There was a regular ordination (*Semichah*) to the office of Rabbi, Elder, and Judge, for the three functions were combined in one. The very name implies the imposition of hands. The presence of three ordained persons was required for ordination. Those who went abroad took with them their letters of orders." —Edersheim, vol. ii. p. 382.

[2] Whether our Saviour has any successors of any kind in His *priestly* office, it is not now essential to consider.

[3] But only in that sense. Whately observes, for example, that our LORD "taught with authority, and not as the scribes," whilst we must teach as the scribes, and not with authority.

CHAP. VII.

going considerations conduct us—to which, indeed, they compel us—and it is this:—

4. *The clergy, the ambassadors of* CHRIST, *however unworthy and sinful they may be, cannot be entitled to less respect, to less attention and obedience, than were the scribes.* For if they are, it must either be because of (1) their *character*, or (2) their *office*. But we have just seen that neither in character nor in office can any man say that the scribes were their superiors. Even if they are "hypocrites," "blind guides," "children of hell," still they are *not worse* than the scribes, and they sit, as the scribes did not, in CHRIST'S and the Apostles' chair. Even if they are "serpents" and "vipers," still they are the accredited teachers of Christianity, at least as much as the scribes and Pharisees were of Judaism. You cannot conceive of any reason why the latter should be implicitly obeyed which does not apply with still greater force to the former. No, there is no escape from this conclusion.[1] The character of the man, however flagitious, does not destroy his office, nor does it invalidate the respect due to his office. If he has been duly appointed CHRIST'S minister; if he has not taken this honour unto himself; if he has been "sent" by those who were sent themselves, then CHRIST'S minister he remains. It may be necessary to degrade him from the discharge of his office, as Abiathar was degraded by Solomon, to condemn him to silence and obscurity, but that must be done, not by his flock, but by competent authority. So long as he retains his

1 Kings ii. 26, 27.

[1] "I pray you consider this, ye that say of the successors of these ungodly men, 'They say, and do not, therefore we ought not to hear them;' you see your Master draws no such inference, nay, the direct contrary. Oh be not wiser than your Master; follow His advice and do not reason against it."—Wesley, *Works*, vii. 181.

official position, that official position must command your respect. What would become of the army, of the magistracy, of the school, of any society, the members of which took upon themselves to disregard any orders given by men of whose characters or views they did not approve? We must, therefore, distinguish between the man and his ministry—the ministry which he has "received of the LORD JESUS." It is our Redeemer Himself enjoins us to do this. So far from doing Him or ourselves a service by contemning, deserting, and perhaps opposing those who are "set over us in the Lord;" so far from its being an imperative duty to repudiate them and the Church of which they are officers, we are defying CHRIST'S distinct command if we take this course. We are not required to follow any clergyman's *example;* we are not required to "do after their works;" it may be necessary for us to loathe and detest their life and conversation, but unless we can prove that they are worse than the scribes and Pharisees, the men who harried our LORD to His death, or that their official position is less sacred and less assured than theirs was, then we are required—required by no mere Apostle, but by the LORD of life Himself, by Him who will call us to our account and assign us our "portion,"—we are required by His example, no less than by His solemn precept, to listen to, to give earnest heed to, to obey implicitly the Church's ministers. For CHRIST'S words to *us*, who do not live in the days of the scribes, but do live under a dispensation which assuredly has not lowered the standard of the virtues, and least of all of the virtue of obedience—CHRIST'S solemn words to us are these: "THE CLERGY SIT IN THE APOSTLES' SEAT: ALL THEREFORE WHATSOEVER THEY BID YOU OBSERVE, THAT OBSERVE AND DO."

Acts xx. 24.

CHAP. VII.

But perhaps you object, "What! am I to obey them, whatsoever they enjoin upon me? What if they teach immorality as the Nicolaitans did at Ephesus and Pergamum? what if they teach "doctrines of devils"? what if they "deny that JESUS is the CHRIST," or "deny the Father and the Son"? Am I still to obey them, because they sit in Christ's and the Apostles' seat?" No, because if they preach *ex cathedra* any such doctrines, they have left both Moses' and the Apostles' seat; they are sitting in a chair of their own choosing; they are neither echoing nor expounding any teaching of our Lord. Our Lord's contemporaries, you will find, were not required by Him to obey the scribes when the scribes *forsook the seat of Moses;* they were not, for example, to think that an oath by the temple was nothing, whilst an oath by the gold of the temple was binding; their obedience was limited to teachings based on the Mosaic law. If the scribes taught as their doctrines (and they sometimes did teach) no doctrines of Moses at all, but "the precepts of men," then neither the multitude nor the disciples were to listen to them. Precisely so, if the clergy forsake Christian teaching altogether; if they leave CHRIST'S seat for the seat of Buddha or Plato or Epictetus, or any other master, or, instead of enforcing CHRIST'S words, contradict them by commandments of men or doctrines of daemons, then you are so far absolved from your allegiance to them. The rule is perfectly clear: when they sit in CHRIST'S and the Apostles' and Moses' seat, they are to be obeyed; when they forsake that chair, they are to be obeyed no longer.[1]

Rev. ii. 6, 15. 1 Tim. iv. 1. 1 John ii. 22.

St. Matt. xxiii. 17.

St. Matt. xv. 9.

[1] It may be asked, "Who is to judge whether the clergy, in any given case, have forsaken the Apostles' seat or not?" The answer is: The individual must judge. But he must not decide

CHAP. VII.

So that our Master CHRIST has decided for us the course to be taken if the clergy of the church or the parish should be men of evil life, if they should be covetous, carnal, unspiritual, sensual; we are *to do as they say, and not as they do.*

Nor is this counsel, it may be well to remark in passing, fraught, as might be supposed, with danger or beset with difficulties. I have heard people make very merry over that last-century clergyman who bluntly told his flock to do as he did and not as he said. Yet he never said a truer word in his life. He only echoed the precept of our LORD which we are now considering.

For which of us dare venture to tell men to do as we do? Which of us dare hold up his life and character as patterns for imitation. An apostle might say, "Be ye followers of me;" but then we are not apostles, and St. Paul, who said this, elsewhere added the qualifying clause, "Even as I am of CHRIST." One is our pattern, even He who is "the image of the invisible GOD." The purest saint in the universal Church would shrink from charging Christians to imitate him. "See thou do it not" would be his cry—and the holier he was, the more he would shrink from it, because the more conscious he would be of his own imperfections. For however lofty our aims and earnest our endeavours, which of us does not fall painfully short of his

1 Cor. iv. 16; Phil. iii. 17.

1 Cor. xi. 1.

Col. i. 15; 2 Cor. iv. 4.

on his individual attainments. Not until he has used all the resources at his command; not until, with a shrinking distrust of his own judgment and a lively sense of his extreme fallibility, he has taken counsel with others, and especially with "those who are set over him in the LORD," must he presume to decide, and then only upon the clearest evidence, that his teachers are not in that given case to be trusted. And even then it does not follow that they are not to be trusted and obeyed in other cases, and still less does it follow that the evil, whatever it may be, is to be remedied by his secession.

CHAP. VII.

ideals; which of us can pretend that his practice always keeps abreast of his preaching? There is not a minister of any "denomination" dare charge his flock to do in every respect as he does; he must be content to bid them do as he says.

Nor need men be afraid to follow the instructions even of a vicious and profligate clergy, and certainly not its *ex cathedra* injunctions. For the worst of men can, and as a rule do, give excellent advice; they can and do faithfully echo CHRIST'S precepts, though they do not follow them themselves. Of course, it is an "ungracious pastor" who "shows the steep and thorny road to heaven," whilst—

> "Like a puffed and reckless libertine
> Himself the primrose path of dalliance treads,
> And recks not his own rede."

No one denies that such a man is a disgrace to the Church; but still the fact remains that the worst pastors can, and as a matter of fact generally do, *preach* well enough; that is to say, those who do as they *say* will do well enough. If such men do not save their own souls, they may nevertheless be the instruments in saving their hearers.[1] It was partly for this reason that St. Paul could rejoice when some men preached CHRIST of envy and strife. An envious and contentious pastor is no more right with GOD, nor do I know that he is a safer guide, than an avaricious or immoral pastor; and if the former can

[1] It must be remembered, too, that the ministry does not exist for preaching purposes merely. "Did the Jewish sacraments convey no saving grace to the hearers, because they were administered by unholy men? If so, none of the Israelites were saved from the time of Eli to the coming of CHRIST. . . . Did the ordinances administered in the time of our Blessed LORD convey no saving grace? Surely then the Holy Ghost would not have commended Zacharias and Elisabeth for walking in them." —Wesley, *Sermon* civ. (vol. vii. p. 183).

preach to a good purpose—preach so as to gladden an Apostle's heart—why not the latter? A messenger who is both lame and blind can nevertheless deliver a message.[1] CHAP. VII.

But if it is still affirmed that men must necessarily run a frightful risk, the risk of losing their own souls by following blind guides, I answer, first, that we are expressly told not to follow them; we are to follow their *instructions*, but are *not* to copy their example; and, secondly, that it may be quite as safe, and indeed safer, to obey the injunctions of duly constituted authorities than to follow our own ideas and likings, or to take our orders from teachers of our own choosing. Anyhow, I cannot believe that men will suffer loss before the tribunal of CHRIST for having implicitly obeyed His clear command. The path of duty may prove to have been here as elsewhere the path of safety. Nor am I sure, again, but that the poor tame course of steadfast submission to constituted authority, however unworthy that authority may have proved itself to be, has its present compensations. For I have observed, or I seem to have observed, that those humble souls who have gone on, year after year, listening patiently to their appointed pastors, though often sorely scandalised and much distressed by their evil example, St. Luke ix. 24.

[1] Wesley strikingly reminds us that our LORD sent forth the Twelve to cast out devils, and that the devils *were subject* to them, yet one of them himself had a devil, and our LORD knew it. And in answer to the question, "Why did our Saviour send him among them?" he replies, "Undoubtedly for our instruction. For a standing unanswerable proof that He sendeth by whom He will send; that He can and doth send salvation to men even by those who will not accept of it themselves."—*Works*, vii. 181. "It is one of the chief mysteries of GOD'S kingdom that unspiritual men can do spiritual work; that devils may be cast out in CHRIST'S name by those whom CHRIST knows not."—*British Weekly*, February 14, 1890.

CHAP. VII.

have at any rate escaped a certain self-complacency and Pharisaic pride, than which there is nothing more hateful to Heaven, which constantly attach to those who, instead of being doers of the law, constitute themselves its judges, and who "heap to themselves teachers having itching ears." GOD has many ways of instructing His elect, and the discipline of unquestioning obedience may perchance do as much for the character as the understanding of all mysteries and the possession of all knowledge.

St. James i. 23.

But there is another conclusion forced upon our attention by these remarkable words, which now demands a brief exposition. It is this:—

5. *If the clergy, though as sinful as the scribes and Pharisees, are to be obeyed no less than the scribes and Pharisees were to be obeyed; if this is* CHRIST'S *command, then all Dissent is directly contrary to His command.* For there has not been, there cannot be, Dissent without the distinct though probably unconscious repudiation of this precept of our LORD. For it is obvious that so long as Christians "observe and do *all things whatsoever*" their lawful clergy bid them observe, there can be no such thing as secession. There may be "dissent"—that is another matter—but Dissent is a sheer impossibility. (Our LORD'S command is not "These things *approve*," but "These things *observe and do*.") And it will be found, as a matter of fact, that all the secessions of these last three centuries have been made in the very teeth of this precept; each separation in its turn has involved the repudiation of the authority of the Christian scribe, the scribe of the kingdom of heaven; each has resulted in the thrusting of other men into Moses' seat. Sometimes the separation has been avowedly made, as in the case of some early Methodists, because of the teaching and character of the

St. Matt. xiii. 52.

clergy. Anyhow, the Dissent which has arisen in England could not have had any existence if this command of CHRIST had been borne in mind. Neither Baptists, Quakers, Methodists, nor Independents could have broken away from the historic society of CHRIST in this land unless they had completely inverted our LORD'S words; unless they had interpreted them to mean this—"You are not in the least degree bound to observe or to do anything which the scribes bid you to observe, unless these scribes, in the first place, satisfy you as to their moral and religious character, and unless, in the second place, their teachings are such as to command your approval. You have 'the right of private judgment;' you owe it to God to exercise it. Take care that you never listen to 'blind guides,' whatever authority they may claim; it is at your peril that you give any heed to hypocrites and vipers, whether they sit in Moses' seat or not; you must have for your ministers 'converted' men; you must recognise none who do not make a 'profession of having undergone a spiritual change.' And even then you must only listen to them so long as they preach the pure Gospel; if they are not sound in the faith, as *you* understand it; if their 'views,' that is to say, do not harmonise with yours, then you are quite free to withdraw yourselves; in fact, you owe it to yourselves to withdraw, to form a new Church, and to appoint ministers who will preach what you approve." I submit to the candid reader that it is on these principles that all Dissent is based. Yet these principles *flatly contradict Christ's precepts.*[1]

[1] Skeats, speaking of the ministry amongst the Independents, remarks, "The sole authority for his office was *his spiritual fitness* and the *consent of the people* to whom he ministered."—*Hist. of*

CHAP. VII.

Nor is Dissent in any way justified, or even profited, if it is maintained that our LORD, in this singular charge, refers exclusively to the *ex cathedra* utterances of the scribes and Pharisees, as embodied in the *teachings of the Sanhedrim*. For the argument still holds good, though the premisses are slightly modified. The argument now is that the Convocations of the Church cannot have less authority, or be entitled to less respect, than the councils of the Jews. In other words, that no reason can be alleged why the decisions of the Sanhedrim should be reverently obeyed whilst the canons of Convocation may be defied at pleasure. And it is worth remembering that Convocation has spoken out on this very subject of Dissent. It will be allowed that if ever the English clergy have spoken *ex cathedra*, it is in the Canons of A.D. 1603. But the ninth Canon runs, "Whosoever shall hereafter separate themselves from the Communion of Saints, as it is approved by the Apostles' rules in the Church of England, and combine themselves together in a new brotherhood, accounting the Christians who are conformable to the doctrine, government, rites, and ceremonies of the Church of England to be profane and unmeet for them to join with in Christian profession, let them be excommunicated *ipso facto*," &c. So spake those who sate in the Apostles' seat in the year 1603. And no sect has arisen in England, no sect can exist here, except in defiance of this ordinance; it can only exist, that is to say, by affirming that

Free Churches, p. 20. Similarly, the *Catechism for Protestant Dissenters* (not, if I may judge from some of its statements, an unquestionable authority) says, 'Every man who is qualified for the ministerial office by *ability and piety* has a right to exercise it in any society that calls him to it, and ordination is by no means necessary to the useful discharge of it." But if this view is right, then our LORD was altogether wrong.

somehow it is not true that "whatsoever the clergy bid men observe," that they are to "observe and do;" it can only exist by ignoring or rejecting this command of Christ.[1] Interpret this precept as we may, we reach the same conclusion, viz., that if this is a part of Christianity, then *Nonconformity is contrary to Christianity.*[2]

[1] In Bogue and Bennett's *History of Dissenters*. vol. i. pp. 90–94, may be found, as one of the principles of Dissent, a distinct repudiation of all ecclesiastical authority. Had the writers intended to combat our Lord's words, they could hardly have done it more directly.

[2] It may possibly be urged that not Convocation, but a General Council, represents under Christianity the position of the Sanhedrim under Judaism. But even if this were so, which I do not allow, still the scribes of our religion have in their councils distinctly and emphatically condemned all secession. See *e.g.* Bingham, *Antiquities*, Book xvii. chap. i.

CHAPTER VIII.

NONCONFORMITY CONTRARY TO THE COMBINED TEACHING AND EXAMPLE OF CHRIST.

"Can you prove that Christ doth separate from all the Christians that you separate from; or that they have no visible communion with Him; or that He taketh them for no churches and disowneth the ministration of all the ministers in the world whom you disown? or yet that it is safe to separate where Christ doth not separate, and to be gone from His house while He there abideth."—Baxter, *Cure of Church Divisions*, p. 266.

CHAP. VIII.

THE precepts of our LORD, one of which we have just examined, are not to be found in the four Gospels alone. Not to speak of the many commandments which He gives us, indirectly, in the Epistles, through the Apostles whom He had chosen, He addresses us directly in the "book" which was sent
Rev. i. 11. to the seven churches of Asia. The "voice as of a trumpet" and "as the sound of many waters" that was heard in Patmos, is the same voice that vibrated in the synagogues of Galilee and in the courts of the LORD'S house in Jerusalem. And its message is still resounding, and is still a message
Chap. ii. 7. "to the churches." What then, let us ask, does
Chap. iii. 1. the Son of GOD, who "hath the seven spirits of GOD," say to us here on the subject of Nonconformity?

Now, it can hardly be necessary to say, and yet, to guard against possible misconception, it had perhaps better be said, that these "seven churches" *were visible churches;* they were the congregations

of professed Christians found in seven of the principal cities of the little province which was then known as Asia.

Nor should it be necessary to repeat, and yet it had better be repeated, that these churches *were not rival or secession churches.* There was not a Nonconformist church amongst them; each church absorbed all the Christians in each city. Whatever their imperfections and impurities—and each church had its share of these—the idea of separation does not appear to have occurred to any of the members at the time when this sevenfold message reached them. For if any secession were even contemplated, and much more if it had actually taken place, either on the ground of the corruptions of the church, or indeed on any ground whatsoever, it is impossible but that it should have been noticed here. But nothing of the kind is mentioned. The Nicolaitans are sometimes spoken of as a "sect," but they were rather a set of teachers, a school of thought. Nor would it improve the position of Dissent if it were established that they were Dissenters. Rev. ii. 6.

But it may be well to emphasise the idea that these congregations, *their impurities and corruptions notwithstanding*, were still "churches," and churches of the Living GOD. "The Living One" everywhere claims them as His. Chap. i. 18. We are sometimes told in these days that "the church is where Christ is"—*ubi Christus, ubi ecclesia.* We are given to understand that a community of professed Christians which has not the Spirit of Christ is no church of Christ at all.[1] Similarly, we are told that that community

[1] "What we believe is, that Christ meant by the church men and women who are conformed to His likeness."—Mr. R. F. Horton.

CHAP. VIII.

or society "is a true church to which God sets His seal in the conversion of the world."[1] It may, therefore, not be inopportune to remind ourselves that the Head of the church designated even that community a "church" which had a name to live, but
Chap. iii. 1. was really dead. It was a church still, though none of its works, and certainly not its work of con-
Ver. 2, R.V. verting the world, were fulfilled before God. It was a *true* church, though it had but "a few names which did not defile their garments."[2] There have been secessions made from the English, as from the Roman Catholic communion, on the ground that it was no church of Christ at all; it was on this ground that some early separatists justified their Nonconformity. We may do well, therefore, to remind ourselves, in passing, that a corrupt, yes, and a "dead" church (provided, that is to say, that it *is* a church, and not a mere private club of human origin),[3] is still a church. And we may also be allowed to ask whether the English Church has been *so much worse* than the churches of Pergamum and Sardis and Laodicea as to forfeit the name which is freely given to these latter communities? We may ask in passing on what grounds the name of "church" can be conceded—and it is conceded by CHRIST Himself—to these Christian bodies, whilst it must be withheld from the historic church of this country. Even if that church has a name to live

[1] Bishop Perowne.

[2] "Before you judge any church to be no church, be able to prove it hath worse crimes to nullify it than any of these had. For none of these were for their faults pronounced no churches of Christ."—Baxter, *Cure*, p. 44.

[3] To be "churches," Christian societies must be formed "by peaceful derivation from the Christian body or by incorporation with it, and in no case by *separation* from a more ancient Christian community."—Palmer, *Treatise on the Church*, vol. i. p. 217.

and *is dead*—still it is no worse than the congregation which the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, Himself denominated "the church in Sardis."

We see, then, that the churches to which this "book" was sent were all of them more or less corrupt, and that some of them were exceedingly corrupt. We can readily understand that it would be so; indeed, it would have been surprising had it been otherwise. For we must remember that these Asiatic churches—and the same remark applies to all the churches of that region, and to the congregations in Europe, were largely recruited from Gentiles. The first members were, for the most part, Pagans, who had been "suckled in a creed outworn." They had breathed from infancy the air of a gross and sensual superstition; they had learned and practised "the deep things of Satan." It is constantly forgotten, when we speak or read of idolatry, both in Old and New Testament times, that such idolatries involved unspeakable abominations; they were not a mere worship of senseless images; it was everywhere a cultus that was steeped in fornication. The early Gentile Christians had not only to turn from "dumb idols," they had to turn from "pleasant vices," vices which they had been encouraged to practise in the name of religion. Can we wonder if they were slow to part with these? need it surprise us if the moral uncleanness of the prevailing Paganism, the Paganism which was still at their doors, and which was interwoven with all the customs and institutions of their country *after* they became Christians no less than before, need we wonder if this tainted and infected their Christianity? We sometimes think of the early church as a select

Chap. ii. 14, 20, 21; iii. 4.

CHAP. VIII.

company of highly sanctified souls, but we forget that the habit of long years becomes second nature, and we forget, too, that the Apostles and first preachers of our religion admitted men into the church on a very slender acquaintance with its doctrines and demands. They first made disciples by baptism; then they tried to teach them CHRIST'S commands. The church was a *school;* its members were but "disciples," but learners; they would be prepared for many lapses and for much imperfection and for some immoralities on the part of those who had so recently turned from foul idolatries to serve the living God. Anyhow, we know as a fact, and we know it on the testimony of our LORD, that some of these Asian churches were defiled by participation in idolatry and fornication. It was not only that the members occasionally fell into it; there were teachers who sedulously encouraged it. "The woman Jezebel" at Thyatira, who called herself a prophetess, whatsoever this name may represent, certainly and unmistakably reveals to our view a persistent effort to "seduce the servants of CHRIST to commit fornication." And what was the "teaching of Balaam" at Pergamum but counsels of uncleanness? and it is implied that the doctrine of Balaam and that of the Nicolaitans were in agreement, at least in this particular, whilst the language of chap. iii. 4 suggests that it was by sins of the flesh that the church in Sardis had been desolated. It is clear then that *these churches*—and the same may be said, though in a less degree, of Ephesus and Laodicea—*were corrupt and polluted*[1]—corrupt and polluted to such an extent as, so far as we can see,

Acts ii. 41; viii. 12, 18, 23, 36; ix. 18; x. 48; xvi. 15, 33, &c. St. Matt. xxviii. 19, 20.

Rev. ii. 20.

Chap. ii. 14. Numb. xxxi. 16; compare chap. xxv. Rev. ii. 15.

[1] This language does not imply that there were no truly saintly men and women in these communities. Some such there must have been.

no church in Europe has been in these later times, and certainly as the Church of this land has not been within the last three hundred years.

And yet, from such a polluted church no Christian in those days thought it his duty to secede.[1] There was no talk, there was no suggestion of separation, even from a "dead" church like that of Sardis. And what is still more remarkable, the Head of the church, who is so jealous of its purity, who has espoused it as a chaste virgin to Himself, *He* says no syllable about secession. There is not the faintest hint from the beginning of these epistles to the close, that any member of any church might do well to leave it and help to form another and a better. If such a hint is anywhere to be found, it would have been discovered long ago. The Nonconformists of to-day would naturally be only too well pleased to justify their separation by an appeal to these scriptures. But they cannot do so. There is nothing here to favour separation; there is everything to enjoin a patient continuance in the church, however great its corruptions may be.

For, as we have already remarked when speaking of the Jewish church, that if ever in the history of the world secession was a duty and a necessity, separation from that church was a duty and a necessity, so we say now of these congregations of Asia. Nonconformists often tell us that they are bound to secede; that they dare not remain in a corrupt communion; that they would be thereby partakers of its sins; that they owe it to the LORD of conscience

[1] "The good [in the Church] are not to be deserted on account of the evil, but the evil are to be tolerated on account of the good, as the prophets tolerated those against whom they spoke such great things, . . . as the Apostles tolerated those who preached Christ through envy, &c."—Augustine, *Epist.* 93.

CHAP. VIII.

to come out of it and be separate, &c. But if this is so, it occurs to us to ask why nothing was said by the Son of GOD or by the Spirit of GOD in these Apocalyptic visions about coming out from the church of Sardis and about being separate from the church of Thyatira? He is surely a better judge of what conscience requires than we can be, and He knows better than we can do what is for the peace and growth of His church, and yet He has not a word to say in favour of Nonconformity. He does not even suggest it as a last resource, in case these churches do not "remember from whence they are fallen and repent." If it was not a dictate of conscience to separate *then*, on the day when these epistles were penned, yet, according to the Nonconformist view, it might any day become such. And yet our Saviour never counsels it, never suggests it, never refers to it at all. He threatens to remove the candlestick out of its place, as indeed He has done, but He does not speak of dividing it.

Rev. ii. 5.

Nor is it difficult to see why the Head of the church never counsels secession, never in any way recognises it as a possible remedy. It is because the church, however corrupt, is still His church—it is "the kingdom of our LORD and of His CHRIST." If GOD does not leave it—and clearly He had not left these churches of Asia—why should man desert it? If these societies were not too bad for the Holy One to rule and inhabit, how could they be too bad for the unholy members to remain in them? In other words, if, in spite of gross abuses, CHRIST still remains Head of the church, and He is both Head and Saviour of *the body, i.e.*, of the visible society, the body corporate of Christians;[1] if He remains the

Chap. ii. 1, 5, 23, 24; iii. 8, 18, &c.

Col. i. 18; Eph. v. 23.

[1] The term "body" can never in the nature of things be used of any spiritual or "invisible" church. See page 187 below.

Head of the community, how can it be wrong for the members to remain members? Can the hand or foot do better than move with the Head, even supposing that they could exist apart from Him? Can conscience require *them* to secede when it permits the King of conscience to retain His supreme place? No, our Saviour could not counsel secession without contradicting Himself, without creating "a schism in the body," without alienating the humbler members from their Glorious LORD. So long as the Church is CHRIST'S Church, so long as He remains in it and watches over it, so long must the members follow His example and remain in it likewise.

1 Cor. xii. 25.

And this consideration disposes of the remark made by a writer who, whilst largely agreeing with the views here advocated, whilst observing, for example, that "though the angel in the seven Epistles is censured with awful severity *before the flock*," yet "nowhere occurs a hint that the flock are meant to break away from the connection and cohesion he represents," nevertheless proceeds to say, "They are *not told not to do so*, but even at Laodicea they are not in the least told to do so."[1] But I venture to observe that they are told not to do so, and that they are told in more ways than one. They are told in the most clear and emphatic way by our Blessed LORD'S example. He had not repudiated, had not forsaken the church at Laodicea; He still wrote to it, still loved it; still He stood before its door and knocked; still He offered it His promises. Clearly His patience was not exhausted; why then should theirs be? He thought it capable of reform; why should they resign all hope of reform by leaving it? But they are also told not to leave the church

[1] Rev. H. C. G. Moule at the Hull Church Congress.

CHAP. VIII.

by our LORD'S silence. The fact that He said nothing about leaving is of course a reason for remaining. For to leave the Christian church, meaning thereby any part of the visible church, must either be, as Whately observes, "a duty or a sin." It is here nowhere represented to us as a duty—and if it were a duty, our Lord would certainly have enforced it here—it must therefore be a sin. It is my contention, indeed, that separation is always sinful unless sinful terms of communion are imposed,[1] and that the Christians of those days knew it to be sinful; they would hardly need, consequently, to be cautioned against it.

But a further reason may be alleged, if any further reason is needed, why nothing is here *expressly* said against secession, and it is this—that our LORD could not in these brief Epistles say everything, and that He had spoken to the Ephesians, Laodiceans, and the rest on this subject already. For it is to be remembered that some of these churches had enjoyed the advantage of Apostolic teaching; probably had most of them been visited by St. Paul, who spent three years in Ephesus, and we know for certain that "all they which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the LORD, both Jews and Greeks." And we further know that to some of these churches Epistles had been written, and that some of those Epistles are not silent on this question—the proof of this will be given later on. So that to say that "they are not told not to separate" is merely to assert that our LORD did not then say everything, did not repeat what He had already said by the lips or the hands of His Apostles, and especially did not multiply precepts when He had already loudly spoken by His example.

Acts xx. 31.

Chap. xix. 10.

Eph. i. 1; Col. iv. 16.

[1] Can the church, or even a church, impose sinful terms of communion? Would it not thereby prove itself to be no church? to be fallen from grace? See p. 217 below.

But it is now time that we traced the bearing of these considerations upon "our unhappy divisions." Have they any message for Dissenters? I submit that they have, and that that message is, that *Nonconformity is contrary to Christianity.*

For this is how the argument stands.

1. The Church of England, at any rate since the Reformation, has never been worse either in doctrine or in discipline than the church in Sardis or Thyatira or Laodicea.

2. CHRIST did not leave, nor did He teach or permit Christians to leave, the churches of Asia, either because of the immoral teaching, the grave abuses, or the defective discipline found therein.

3. If our LORD neither commanded nor permitted secessions from these Asian churches, then He can neither require nor sanction separation from the Church of England. If the former was against His will, the latter cannot be less so. If Dissent was unnecessary then, why is it necessary now?

What we want, in fact, and what we respectfully ask from our separated brethren, is a plain answer to these three questions:—

First, Is the Church of England *worse* than the church of Sardis was? If so, in what respects?

Second, If it is *not* worse, then why must they maintain a separation from it, when our LORD remained the Ruler of the church in Sardis, and so required the members to remain under His rule?

Third, Can it be right, can it be Christian, for the members to make or maintain a separation from any church to which CHRIST continues to vouchsafe His presence?

CHAPTER IX.

NONCONFORMITY CONDEMNED BY THE PRAYER OF CHRIST.

"The unity of the Church doth not lie in a bare communion of faith and love, but in a joint participation of the ordinances appointed by Christ to be observed in His Church. . . . The unity of the Church is founded in some external bonds as well as internal; that is, one faith and one Baptism, as well as one Lord and one Spirit; so the manifestation of this unity ought to be by *external acts*, for how can this unity be discovered by acts merely internal and spiritual."—Stillingfleet, *Unreasonableness of Separation*, pp. 210, 211.

"If it be the duty of the Church to represent her Lord among men, and if she faithfully performs that duty, it follows by an absolutely irresistible necessity that the unity exhibited in His Person must appear in her. She must not only be one, but visibly one, in some distinct and appreciable sense —in such a sense that men shall not need to be told of it, but shall themselves see and acknowledge that her unity is real. . . . The spectacle [now] presented by her to the world is in direct and palpable contradiction to the unity of the Person of her Lord. . . . What the Church ought to possess is a unity that the eye can see."—Dr. Milligan, *The Resurrection of our Lord*, p. 199.

CHAP. IX.

WE have now seen that Dissent, that is to say, separation from the Christian society established ages ago in this country, is in direct opposition to the *example* of our Sacred REDEEMER, who did not separate from the Jewish church notwithstanding that its errors and abuses were as gross as any that have been witnessed in the sacred community purchased by His blood and governed by His gracious Spirit.

And we have also seen that such Dissent is equally

opposed to our SAVIOUR'S *precept*, to the express command which He gave His disciples to recognise and obey the authorised teachers of GOD'S ancient church, although those teachers were every way worse than the clergy of the Christian community are, or have been, and certainly considerably worse than the clergy of the English Church since the date of its reformation.

And we have discovered, lastly, that Dissent contradicts the combined example *and* teaching of CHRIST as exhibited in the Epistles to the seven churches of Asia. We have observed that, corrupt and even "dead" as were some of those churches, our risen and glorified LORD neither left them Himself nor permitted others to leave them. His silence, when coupled with His own example, is a decisive testimony against secession.

But this is by no means all that our Holy LORD has to say upon this subject, for His example and His precept are alike illustrated and enforced by His *prayer*. It now remains for us to show that Dissent is a distinct denial and repudiation of a "LORD'S Prayer" of exceptional solemnity and importunity, of His thrice-repeated supplication that all His disciples might be one.

I have already remarked that there are few, if any, precepts of our CHRIST more striking—I might have said more shocking to some of our modern ideas—than that of St. Matt. xxiii. 1–3. There are few if any of His prayers more impressive and suggestive than that which is recorded for us in St. John xvii. 20–23. Let us reflect for a moment or two on the circumstances under which it was uttered, and the conclusions which it involves. It is undeniable that—

1. *This prayer for unity was offered at the supreme*

CHAP. IX.

moment of His ministry. If anything can lend additional sanction or sacredness to petitions of His, then we shall find it in the circumstance that this was our SAVIOUR'S last dying petition for His church. There was no hour like that in His whole life. That was a night to be much remembered. He then spoke to His Apostles, the men whom for three years He had carefully trained for the ministry, for the last time before He suffered, and He had collected them because of what He had yet to say to them and to show them. With desire He had desired to eat that Passover with them. That night He must give them, and did give them, His "body" to eat, His "blood" to drink. But after they had eaten the unleavened bread, and after they had drunk of the fruit of the vine, of which (He pathetically reminds them) He will drink no more on earth, He still has a work to do. Though "ready to depart on the morrow," like St. Paul, He "continued His speech" towards midnight. Nay, after He has given them His parting counsels, and even after they have sung their last hymn, He still has somewhat to say. From praise He passes to prayer; He enters in their presence on His great high-priestly work of intercession. Conscious that the hour is come, He will consecrate the last fleeting moments to supplication. But it is for them He prays, not for Himself, not for the world, though the world was dear to Him, and He came to save it. And what is it that, with the awful cross in full view, He prays the Father for? He prays that they may be *kept;* He prays that they may be *sanctified;* and, last, not least, He prays "that they all *may be one.*" That this is so, no intelligent Nonconformist will deny. Nor will he deny, in the second place, that—

St. Luke xxii. 15.

St. Matt. xxvi. 29.

Acts xx. 7.

St. John xiv.–xvi. St. Matt. xxvi. 30.

St. John xvii. 1.

Ver. 9.

Vers. 11, 15.

Ver. 17.

Vers. 11, 21, 22, 23.

2. *This prayer was offered three if not four times.*

As a little later in the garden, and as years later did St. Paul—doubtless taught by Him—"for this thing He besought the LORD *thrice*." This is a threefold cord which (we should have thought) could not be broken; that it has been broken manifests, perhaps more strikingly than anything else, the power of the prince of this world. The very iteration shows the intensity of our LORD'S desire. He here sets us an example of that importunity, that ἀναίδεια, which He elsewhere commends to us. If Pharaoh's dreams were doubled to show that the thing was established by GOD, may we not say that CHRIST'S prayer was repeated to indicate to us how much this thing is desired of GOD? And here it is to be observed, what our LORD Himself is careful to tell us, that—

2 Cor. xii. 8.

St. Luke xi. 8.

3. *In this importunate prayer, offered on this supreme occasion, we, the Christians of to-day, had a part.* Not for the Apostolic college alone, nor yet for the hundred and twenty souls who then confessed Him in Jerusalem, did He make His supplication; He had England and Europe in His mind; He prayed for us *here and now.* With all the grievous dissensions and divisions of Christians in prospect; knowing beforehand of our two hundred and sixty sects—Justin Martyr tells us that our LORD, among His sayings prophetic of division in the church, declared "there shall be schisms and heresies"—He said expressly, "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which [*shall*] believe on Me through their word." His pleading voice, borne across the centuries, reaches even to us; it is a prayer that His church in England and throughout the world may be "one body."[1] Furthermore—

Tryph., p. 235, B.

St. John xvii. 20.

[1] "We may infer from the earnestness of that prayer that the church was in imminent danger of disunion, and that so great

CHAP. IX.

4. *This prayer, whether then first addressed to the Father or not, has been unceasingly presented ever since that day.* For we are not to suppose that CHRIST'S prayer, like His sacrifice, was only "once offered." Who shall say but that when He spent the whole night in prayer to GOD, this cry for unity ascended again and again to the heavenly throne? It is impossible to suppose that it was first conceived, first presented, in the presence of death. No, it was rather that the "ruling passion was strong in death;" the very intensity of His words shows that this was the desire of His life. Anyhow, seeing that "He ever liveth to make intercession for us," we may be sure that He still pleads for unity. For the unity so dear to His heart that last sorrowful night cannot possibly be less dear now. And if our LORD desires it still, then He must plead for it still. Here is a thought for Christians, that whilst we go on, year after year, wrangling and dividing and subdividing, year after year, and century after century, our Most Holy Redeemer goes on praying before the throne that "we all may be one!" Consider, again, that—

St. Luke vi. 12.

5. *This prayer to the Father is also an appeal to us.* We might almost say that our LORD here prays to us. For we have the power to resist and to defeat His prayer, and how freely that power has been used! There are thousands of Christians at the present day resolutely determined that, come what may, His disciples shall *not* be one. They positively think that they do GOD service by maintaining a "schism in the body." Their answer to the pleading of CHRIST is—"the Dissidence of Dissent"—"Dissent for its own sake and as a principle." Pulpits, plat-

an evil would most probably at some time arrive."—Palmer, vol. i. p. 76.

forms, newspapers, are all busily engaged in resisting His will.[1] Any efforts after conciliation, even attempts to remove prejudices and to answer objections, provoke, in a certain class, a storm of abuse or insinuation.[2] "Appeals" are addressed to "wavering Nonconformists"—as if Nonconformity were not in itself an evil; as if it must at any cost be maintained. The misdeeds of the Church centuries ago—and what Church has, or can have, a perfectly clean record?—are raked up and paraded as so many reasons against reconciliation now. And all the time The Crucified makes His silent supplication to us to cease from strife and division. For, of course, His prayer prescribes our duty no less than His commands; no command could reveal His will more clearly. But that is not all; His prayer is a prayer *to us*. For though God must influence our wills, yet He will not force them, and it rests with us, in the last resort, to grant or to refuse this prayer. Why are we Christians not one? The fault cannot be GOD'S.

[1] I suppose the *British Weekly* is one of the ablest and best of Dissenting journals. But it is painful to observe how, with much that is high-minded and Christlike, it can never resist the opportunity of a fling at the Church, and a fling that reveals a smouldering hatred. Now, the Church exhibits a curious mixture of real learning and barbarous ignorance; now, it is not at all remarkable for its erudition; now, the Archbishop of Canterbury is not a scholar. The recent proposal of Mr. Price Hughes to recognise "the historic episcopate" threw it into an agony of distress. And it has boldly advocated disestablishment on the ground that Dissent is stationary, if not receding, and that nothing else will resuscitate it.

[2] "Every attempt to remove anything that may seem legitimately to divide them [Scottish Presbyterians] is hotly resented and usually embitters the relations it was meant to sweeten. The Free Church had no ground of Dissent left when Patronage was abolished. . . . But, rather than join the Established Church again, it threw over its own doctrine," &c.—*Times*, May 25, 1892. "To certain zealots," says Bacon, "all speech of pacification is odious."—*Essays of Unity in Religion.*

CHAP. IX.

We are not one, because He "*would* have gathered us together," and we "*would not;*" because we have denied Him His heart's desire. But we observe, lastly, that—

St. Matt. xxiii. 37.

6. *This prayer which appeals to us is also a prayer for us to use.* Like that other "LORD'S Prayer"—for this petition, be it remembered, is an *oratio dominica*" no less than "Our Father"—it is a pattern for our imitation. "After this manner," if not in these very words, we are to pray. A moment's reflection will show that our Master CHRIST here *requires* His disciples to pray for unity. He requires it because we are to will what He willed, and to seek it as He sought it. If with desire He desired the oneness of His Church, then His followers must desire the same; if to attain that unity He prayed the Father, then we must go and do likewise. It is useless to say that He did not tell us expressly to present this petition. His example speaks louder than any words could do, and why, when we know His will, must we wait to be told to do it? There is no escape from this conclusion, that, if it was right and necessary for our Great Example to pray thus, it is right and it is necessary for us to do the same. Indeed, this prayer for unity is but a part, an expansion of the LORD'S Prayer. When we say, "Thy kingdom come: Thy will be done," we are really asking that all Christians may be one.

But, the significancy and the peculiar solemnity of this prayer of our LORD for the Church He was about to purchase with His blood being established, let us now approach the only point which is really in dispute, namely, *what sort of unity* it was and is that our Blessed Saviour contemplated. Was it a mere sentiment? Was it a fraternal regard? Was it a mere "union of hearts"? Of course it was all

that; there can be no unity worthy of the name without this. But was that all? Can any sentiment of affection, however deep and sincere, satisfy the longings of our LORD, once "the Desire of all nations," now the Desirer of all nations, so long as it permits of divisions, of secessions and separations amongst His followers? We are sometimes assured that it can. We are informed that He prayed for unity, not union, and we are also told that unity can co-exist with much diversity. "The human race," it is argued, "is one, despite numberless varieties and diversities, in colour, appearance, language," and so it is concluded that "churches which have individually a separate corporate existence—say the Presbyterian, Independent, and Episcopalian churches —may be one in the New Testament sense." We are reminded that "the same causes which hinder all states and governments from being merged into one great kingdom prevent the Church from being one vast visible organisation."[1] It may be well for us to consider these allegations before we examine our LORD'S words.

We are told that it was for unity that our Saviour prayed, and that unity can co-exist with much diversity. Undoubtedly it can. There is much diversity, both of opinion and of usage, within the English Church, for example, but such diversity does not necessarily destroy its unity.[2] On this point, therefore, we are agreed. But I venture to remark that the question is—not whether unity can co-exist with *diversity*, but whether it can co-exist with *division*.

[1] Dr. Marcus Dods.

[2] "The different views of High and Low Churchmen involve no schism. . . . The divisions caused within the Church by different apprehensions of the same fundamental truth by differently constituted minds, come short of schism."—Lord Norton, *High and Low Church*.

CHAP. IX.

For it is not mere diversity that separates Presbyterians and Independents from (so-called) "Episcopalians;" there has been in each case a secession, an act of separation and renunciation. Presbyterians have deserted the communion of "Episcopalians;" Independents have stood aloof, have "gathered churches" from both; they stand aloof from both still. I venture to ask, therefore, these two questions:—First, were these disciples of CHRIST still "one" *when* they separated? Could there be any real unity, anything resembling oneness, at the time when the breach was first made? Common sense tells us that there could not be. History says there was not. History tells us that the Independents denounced both the Presbyterians and the "Episcopalians" in very forcible language. Were they still "one" with the former when they designated them "the Pharisees of these times," or when they accused them of "setting up a counterfeit discipline instead of CHRIST'S government"? Were they one with the latter when they spoke of their "stinking, patchery-devised Apocrypha liturgy," of their "old written rotten stuff . . . abstracted out of the Pope's blasphemous mass-book"?[1] Were Presbyterians, again, one with Independents when they described them "as having the least zeal for the truth of GOD of any men that we know"? Were Independents and Presbyterians combined "one" with Churchmen when they "inflamed the Parliament to abolish the old form of church government by bishops,"[2] when they put an Archbishop to death, or when they made it a penal offence to use the Book of Common Prayer? Or, to come to later times, were the "Primitives,"

[1] Quoted by Curteis, *Dissent in its Relation to the Church of England*, p. 78.

[2] Mosheim, *Institutes*, iv. 231.

the "Bible Christians," the "Wesleyan Reformers," still one with the Wesleyan Methodists when, after many recriminations and bitter wranglings, they successively separated? But no one will, I imagine, maintain that these various separatist bodies preserved their unity *when* they separated; it may be urged, however, that a substantial unity has sprung up amongst them since. We shall be reminded that Presbyterians, Independents, and Wesleyans occasionally exchange pulpits; that from time to time they send each other fraternal greetings; that they hold united services, and that, though they differ on some few points of doctrine or discipline, yet in the main they are in thorough agreement, &c. But we answer: Even if this is so, this is not *unity*. It may be courtesy; it may be friendliness, but there is no *oneness*—unless oneness is the same as separateness. Does any one contend that the denominations are all one, either amongst themselves or with the Church? Let him turn to their standards, their trust deeds, and above all to their denominational organs, the so-called religious newspapers, and he will soon be undeceived. Three extracts may be given here—they are but samples of many more. The first is from a Welsh paper, the *Goleuad*—it was reprinted in the *Church Times* of May 9, 1890. After confessing that "the petty jealousy and bitter animosity which Nonconformists exercise against each other must turn against them with deadly effect in the end," the writer proceeds to speak of the Welsh church as their "one common enemy;" complains that "it turns all their bickerings and quarrellings to its own profit," and says, "it has sworn to destroy them all." Is this the substantial unity which has accrued to us since separation—"jealousy," "animosity," "bickerings," "quarrellings," a "common

CHAP. IX.

enemy"? Is this the unity as distinguished from union for which Christ prayed? The second is from the *British Weekly* of January 14, 1892. Speaking of a certain member of Parliament, it says, "His opposition to the Clergy Discipline Bill on the ground that immoral clergymen *injured* the Church of England, and *therefore ought to be left alone*, was *possibly impolitic*." Is this our idea of unity—one follower of CHRIST deliberately advocating the degradation and dishonour of a Christian community, and a high-class religious organ pronouncing such conduct "impolitic"—"*possibly* impolitic"? The last is culled from the *Methodist Recorder* of January 16, 1892. "The High Church party means war to the death. There is no meanness, or quibbling, or insolence, or social tyranny from which they will forbear in their endeavour to snuff out or trample down those who do not agree with them. . . . For the sake of our country and the liberties which have been won through blood and fire it is our duty also to fight. He that hath no sword, let him sell his cloak and buy one." And though I have only quoted Nonconformist organs, I have no doubt but that the Church papers could furnish similar proofs of the "union of hearts."[1] But if it is urged that these are quite extreme instances, and that unity does really exist notwithstanding, then let me quote a witness who should be impartial, Dr. Parker of the City Temple, who on July 21, 1889, spoke thus: "The sects are cutting each others' throats. The spirit of madness is in the Christian denominations." We may take leave to doubt, therefore, whether denominationalism is consistent with unity; we may be inclined to think that, in the nature of things,

[1] The organs of the denominations only reflect the language which is constantly on the lips of the members.

rival communions must breed rivalry and jealousy and hatred, and that Dissent, as it began, so it must always continue, in dissensions.

We see then that unity, if it is compatible with diversity, is hardly compatible with division. To most men it will seem that unity and disunion or separation are contradictions in terms.

But we are told, forsooth, that "the human race is one, despite its manifold varieties," &c. But it does not require much penetration to see that this analogy is altogether misleading and delusive. For if all our LORD contemplated or desired was that the church might be one *as the race is one*, it is difficult to see why He should pray for this at all, for what else can the church be? For the race is only one in this sense, that it is composed of human beings, of the *genus homo*, and the church is composed of nothing else. That does not, however, prevent these human beings from collecting into intensely hostile *communities;* it does not prevent their waging internecine wars against each other. The only unity of the race is a unity of *structure* and origin; it is true all nations are made of one blood, just as all Christians are born of one Spirit, but that consideration involves no unity of *relations;* it prevents neither nations nor Christians from being alienated and divided in all other respects. Certainly when nations have separated from nations, as the Southern States of America did from the North—from "the *Union*"—or as the Bulgarians and Roumanians have done from Turkey, "oneness" is hardly the word we should use to describe their relations—and Dissenters have in this way separated from the Church. In fact, the mistake which the argument makes is to infer from the similarity and equality and common origin of the *individuals* who

Acts xvii. 26. St. John i. 13; iii. 5.

CHAP. IX.

compose the race—not the similarity or common origin of the individuals who compose the church, but—the similarity and solidarity and fraternity of the *communities* into which they have organised themselves. It is obvious, therefore, that if the unity among Christian men is merely like that which exists amongst all men, the less that is said about it the better.

And as to Dr. Dods's other remark, that "the same causes which hinder all states and governments from being merged into one great kingdom prevent the church from being one vast visible organisation," it is enough to say that even if this were quite true (in which case it would be an effective argument against Romanist pretensions), it is no argument whatever for Dissent. For Dissent does not mean (as the above illustration would imply) so many independent kingdoms in so many different regions, but a vast number of rival kingdoms in one and the same country. In fact, both these illustrations, this and the one just considered, point clearly to *national* churches, not to competitive churches in the same territory. He says that one world-wide ecclesiastical organisation is impossible. That may or may not be so. But if it is so, that is no reason why the *church* of each country, like the *government* of each country, should not be one. Any other system means anarchy and confusion in the commonwealth; how can it permit of unity in the church?

Suppose, however, we allow (for the sake of argument) that a sort of unity does prevail amongst the "denominations"—and no doubt the Wesleyans or the Swedenborgians or the Christadelphians are in some respects at one even with the Church of Rome—still it must be admitted, and it will be readily

admitted, that such unity is at the best but *partial;* it is very far from being general, much less perfect. It will also be admitted, that whatever this unity may be, it is not *visible;* it does not produce *union.* Is it not so? Then I reply at once, *It is not the "oneness" for which Christ prayed,* for that was, first, *visible*, and, secondly, *perfect.* I say that He prayed for visible unity, for corporate union.[1] This will hardly be denied in the face of those words of verse 21—repeated in verse 23—"that the world may know that Thou hast sent Me." The "oneness" He yearned for was something that the world could see and know; it was to be so notorious, so conspicuous as to furnish a convincing proof of His Divine mission.[2] Can any one say that separation, that manifest *disunion* furnishes such a proof? How can the world recognise a unity which lies hidden in the heart, which is a sentiment and no more? We may talk about our fraternal regard, about our substantial agreement, &c., but all that the world *sees* is that men who will dine together, and even

[1] It is obvious that it was not merely an inward unison or concord which was contemplated by Him, for this reason as well as others, because such is not the natural signification of the terms used to denote Christian unity—"We being many are one body." Christ is, like the body, integral, but compounded of many parts."—Gladstone, *Church Principles*, pp. 105–6.

[2] "The unity of disciples, while it springs out of a direct relation to CHRIST, must have some external expression that it may affect those without the church."—Westcott. But Dissenters are now beginning to admit that only visible reunion can fulfil our SAVIOUR'S prayer. "We are one with Mr. [Price] Hughes in thinking that this prayer of our Blessed LORD will be answered completely by nothing short of an external unity, for which, therefore, it is the duty of all believers to strive and plead."—*British Weekly*, Sept. 29, 1892. The comment of the *Methodist Times* (Oct. 9, 1892) on these words is worth citing:—"That concedes the whole issue, and differs *toto cœlo* from the old Dissenting position, that CHRIST never intended external unity, but only the internal and spiritual union, which indeed exists in spite of us."

CHAP. IX.

dwell together, cannot agree to worship together. It is not necessary, of course, that there should be uniformity—see Article XXXIV.—but sectarianism means something very different from all this; it means, as the world knows very well, that we are all at sixes and sevens in our doctrines and ideas; that we flatly contradict one another; that we regard each other with "watchful jealousy" and call each other "enemies;" that we are constantly proclaiming what dangerous doctrines the others hold; that we warn the world of the grave risks it runs by listening to any of us. No, whatever "union of hearts" there may be amongst the different denominations, the world can never recognise them as "one," until at least they can agree to differ, until they cease to make every little difference a ground of separation. The world will always say that a *real* must involve a *visible* oneness.[1]

And is not this visible disunion (for whilst the unity is invisible, the disunion is conspicuous enough) one chief reason for the comparative failure of Christianity, both in England and in America? It is allowed that in this country not more than five per cent. of the working classes statedly attend any place of public worship. It is confessed that South London, for example, in spite of its numerous chapels and churches, is practically a Pagan community. And of the sixty millions in the United States, it has been recently affirmed that forty millions, whilst not avowedly anti-Christian, nevertheless stand aloof from all the

[1] "The world will never be converted by a disunited church. Even Bible circulation and missionary exertion upon the largest scale will be powerless to convert it unless they are accompanied by the strength which unity alone can give."—Milligan, *The Resurrection of our Lord*, p. 202.

communions. I venture to ask how much of this irreligion is chargeable to our unhappy divisions? For division means both uncertainty and controversy, and uncertainty breeds indifference, whilst controversy provokes hatred. I appeal to the language which the denominations constantly use about the Roman branch of the church, and in a less degree about the English; I appeal to the charges of priestcraft, sacerdotalism, and the like, which they fling about so freely. What could they do more to make the world distrust all religion? No, the world does *not* know, does not see for itself, as it would do if we were "united in one holy bond of truth and peace, of faith and charity," that our CHRIST is sent of GOD. The very attitude of the world towards religion is a proof that Christians cannot be one.

But even if this is disputed, even if it should be courageously denied that our LORD spoke expressly of a *visible* union of all Christians, still it must be admitted that nothing less than this will realise His aspirations. For, at any rate, He certainly prayed for a *close and perfect* unity; that His disciples might be united as closely, as intimately, as indissolubly as are the Persons of the Godhead.[1] These were His words—"That they may be one, even as We are one"—"that they may be perfected into one." Will any one tell us what words our

St. John xvii. 22; cf. v. 21. Ver. 23.

[1] "The ultimate source [of unity] is, according to the LORD'S own teaching, the unity of the Godhead—'that they may be one, *even as we*,' &c. The effect of the outpouring of the Spirit is to make 'the multitude of them that believed of one heart,' &c. Baptism becomes the source of unity. 'In one Spirit were we all baptized into one body;' the one bread becomes the security of unity. 'One bread, one body.' The unity starts with being spiritual, but it issues in the one body."—Lock, in *Lux Mundi*, p. 378.

CHAP. IX.

Sacred LORD could have used to describe a unity still more intimate and profound? Or will any one say that two hundred and sixty, or even six, or even two, separated bodies of Christians can realise this ideal? The Father and the Son are not two separate Beings; how then can Christian unity permit of two separate, and, because separate, rival organisations? It is clear, then, that whatever unity may exist amongst the different denominations, it is not, and it is nothing like, the oneness for which CHRIST prayed.[1] No doubt that oneness would be far from being completely realised even if all Christians were re-united in one body; it would, at any rate, be much nearer realisation than it ever can be as long as they are sundered into bodies which regard each other as "enemies," and which talk with a light heart of "war unto death."

As before, I sum up the argument of the chapter in a few words:

1. It is CHRIST'S will, as proved by His prayer—in other words, it is a part of CHRIST'S Christianity—that His disciples should all be one.

2. Dissent has destroyed, and in the nature of things it must destroy, this "oneness," both the union and the unity of Christians.

3. Therefore Dissent is contrary to Christianity.

[1] "The invisible things of GOD are intended to be understood by the things which are made. It cannot be His design that the intrinsic unity of His people, thrice prayed for by the SAVIOUR on the night of His Passion, should be symbolised by their outward dissensions, or that the ultimate oneness of the church triumphant in heaven should be prefigured by schisms in the church militant on earth."—Mr. P. V. Smith at Hull Church Congress, *Guardian*, Oct. 1, 1890.

CHAPTER X.

NONCONFORMITY CONTRARY TO THE EXAMPLE OF THE APOSTLES.

"This Epistle [1 Corinthians] is well fitted to disabuse our minds of the idea that the primitive church was in all respects superior to the church of our own day. We turn page after page, and find little but contention, jealousies, errors, immorality, fantastic ideas, immodesty, irreverence, profanity."—Dr. Marcus Dods, *Expositor's Bible*, p. 277.

"You cannot name one combined company of churches from the Apostles' days until now that had no error."—Baxter, *Reply to Owen.*

CAN we gather anything from the *example* of the Holy Apostles, understanding by that word their action with respect to the churches which they founded or visited, as to the lawfulness or unlawfulness of Dissent? I respectfully submit to Nonconformists, as men who, whatever their attitude to the Church may be, are, for the most part, sincerely desirous to follow the "apostles and prophets" on whom the church is built, that the example of the Apostles clearly proves that Christianity, as they understood it, makes no provision and leaves no room for Nonconformity; that it lends no sanction whatever to the popular idea, so rooted in the minds of most English people that they never pause to ask whether it is right or wrong, that dissatisfied members of the Church are free to secede, and to form any number of rival communions in the same city or country.

Eph. ii. 20.

CHAP. X.

And in considering what the Apostles teach us *indirectly*, by their *attitude* rather than by their express words—these words will come before us later on—as to the lawfulness and necessity, or otherwise, of Dissent, we observe that

1. *All the churches with which the Apostles had to do were more or less impure.* I shall prove presently that this *was* so, but before I embark on that proof, it may be well to remark that in the nature of things this *must have been* so. For the church, whether in England or the East, and whether in the nineteenth century or the first, is confessedly made up of *men*, not of angels; of men of like passions and like infirmities with other men. No doubt they are, or should be, *regenerate* men, but even regenerate men retain their human nature; they do not leave the *phronema sarkos* behind them when they enter the church. As Chrysostom observes of one of the Apostles, "Even if he was St. Paul, still he was a man." Besides, if the church is a *school*, which is the ancient and Catholic conception of its design—a school and not a showroom;[1] if it is made up of "disciples," these disciples must have some ignorance and imperfections, or there would be nothing left for them to learn. But whatever view we take of the Church, on one point we are agreed, viz., that everywhere and always the character both of the ministers and members leaves very much to be desired. However careful any communion may be as to the persons it admits to membership, however stringent the tests it imposes, it cannot exclude the old Adam: it cannot tear up all "roots of bitterness," cannot guard

ART. IX.

[1] "The church is an instrument under God to make people better; not a society to label all its members as perfect. — Bishop Ridding.

against grievous lapses, cannot keep out unctuous hypocrites.[1] Even if it demands, as Dr. Dale tells us Congregationalists do, from every candidate for membership, that he should "narrate the story of his awakening to religious consciousness," or if it requires, as the Baptists do, "a profession of having undergone a spiritual change," still it constantly finds that these awakened and converted "Church members" are very far gone from original righteousness. I believe it was a Baptist minister who said of his "church" that "a more ill-conditioned and cantankerous set of men you will not find in a day's march," and I observe frequent complaints on the part of Congregationalists that so many of their members are "dead, but not buried." In the matter of church members, therefore, we may say, we have "seen an end of all perfection;" we see nothing but the imperfection which is stamped upon everything human. We all know how rare a thing it is, in spite of all of our professions, to find a member or minister of the church who lives up to his ideal, who follows the blessed footsteps of the Perfect Life. "The true Christian saint," says a celebrated Agnostic writer, is a "rare phenomenon, one of the most wonderful to be witnessed in the moral world;" and then he justly adds that "he is an exception amongst thousands or millions of professing Christians." No; all our churches are more or less imperfect, and, I may add, oftener more than less. The man who went about protesting that he would join a pure church, if only he could find one, was

[1] "No form of polity, indeed no severity of discipline, can enable us to draw the line with unerring accuracy between 'the saints and faithful brethren' and those who 'obey not the Gospel of our LORD JESUS CHRIST.'"—Dale, *Christ and the Controversies of Christendom*, p. 32.

CHAP. X.

presently reminded that that church would cease to be pure as soon as *he* joined it.[1]

And if this is the case now—that there is no such thing as a spotless or incorrupt church, it cannot have been any less the case in the Apostolic age. The church members of the first century, take them one and all, can hardly have been of a higher type than those of the present day, and this just because of their antecedents and surroundings; just because they had—in many cases with little or no training and preparation—been suddenly translated from a religion of darkness and uncleanness into the kingdom of GOD'S dear Son. It is to be remembered, too, that these communities had at this date neither Creeds nor Scriptures to help them and to serve as a bulwark against false doctrine. In fact, the Apostolic churches would rather resemble the congregations of our Mission Field than the settled and sheltered churches of our own country. No doubt they had the fervour, the simplicity, the enthusiasm which generally distinguish recent converts from heathenism, but then they had the usages and traditions and habits of a lifetime to unlearn, and they had the gross allurements and temptations

Acts viii. 13; xvi. 33, &c.

1 "The New Testament teaches that wherever the living CHRIST is manifested in a human life, there is the Church, not an organisation. . . . The Church consists not of the christened, but of the Christly."—Mr. R. F. Horton, *British Weekly*, June 30, 1892. It would have been distinctly helpful if Mr. Horton had informed us *where* this teaching is to be found in the New Testament. This is a sample of many reckless statements made on this subject, which are drawn entirely from the imagination, and are totally at variance with the teaching of Holy Writ. According to this writer, one man may make a congregation, and there was no church at all at Sardis! And if churches consist only of the Christlike, how many will be reduced to "me and the meenister"—with grave doubts as to the minister!

which the prevailing Paganism presented to them at every turn. It is a favourite assumption that the first Christians were, with hardly an exception, superlative and immaculate saints, but it is an assumption which is in the teeth of all the facts. For a very cursory examination of the Epistles will convince the reader that those early church members were very much like the church members of later centuries. Nor is this to be wondered at, for human nature, the flesh as well as the world and the devil, are the same in every age.

But let us now turn to the Acts and the Epistles: let us see what they tell us as to the moral and spiritual condition of the early church. I trust I may be pardoned a somewhat lengthy review of their contents, for I fear nothing short of this will dissipate the popular idea that the primitive Christians were infinitely superior to those of every later period.

We begin with the Acts of the Apostles. It is true that in chap. ii. 43–47, and again in chap. iv. 32–35, we have beautiful pictures of the affection and devotion of the church in Jerusalem, but how soon are those pictures blurred and disfigured by some of the darkest of traits! In chap. v. 1–12 we find that lying and gross deceit have already crept into the church; in chap. vi. 1 we are told of a murmuring and of imputations of favouritism amongst the disciples. Chap. viii. 8–24 reveals to us a neophyte, confirmed, it would seem, by the first of the Apostles, still in the gall of bitterness and the bond of iniquity, and so thoroughly carnally-minded as to think that the gift of GOD could be purchased with money. Chap. xi. 3 shows us contentions even against the action of that Apostle; chap. xv. 1 records the introduction of destructive heresies into the new

CHAP. X.

Ver. 24.

community, heresies which troubled and subverted the souls of the members; whilst the 39th verse discloses to us a sharp and unseemly contention even between two of the Apostles. The rest of the book, being less a history of the early church than a narrative of the missionary journeys of St. Paul, does not reveal to us much concerning the internal condition of the first Christian societies, but chap. xx. is remarkable for the forecast of moral mischief and divisions which St. Paul delivers to the Ephesian elders. He warns them that "grievous wolves" will enter in among them, "not sparing the flock," and that of their own selves men will arise, "speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them." Let us now pass to the Epistles, though we can only glance at their testimony; an exhaustive review of their contents is quite beyond our present purpose. That to the *Romans* contains a frightful picture of the moral state of the heathen amongst whom these early Christians lived, yet no one at all familiar with the condition of the imperial city at this period can say that it is in the least degree overdrawn.[1] But I only refer to it here because this description helps us to understand the appeal of chap. vi. 13, that the Roman Christians should not render their bodies "instruments of unrighteousness unto sin," and the warning contained in chap. xiii. 13 against rioting and drunkenness, against chambering and wantonness—and, I may add, not unsimilar warnings in other Epistles—whilst chap. xvi. 17, 18 reveals to us that even in those early days, with all their primitive zeal and brotherly love, there were men who caused divisions and offences,

Vers. 29, 30.

Chap. i. 21–32.

[1] The English reader will find a vivid—perhaps somewhat too vivid—picture of the state of society at Rome in Archdeacon Farrar's recent novel, *Darkness and Dawn*.

who beguiled the innocent, and, whilst seeming to serve CHRIST. were really serving their own bellies; a statement which is incidentally confirmed in Phil. i. 15, where St. Paul tells us that there were evangelists at Rome who preached CHRIST of envy and strife, hoping thus to aggravate the misery of one who was already suffering bonds and imprisonment. I pass over, for reasons which will appear presently, the Epistles to the Corinthians, but that to the *Galatians* speaks of a preaching which troubled the church and perverted the Gospel of CHRIST; a preaching, too, which removed the church members to a different gospel, and which constrained St. Paul to pronounce a fervid anathema on those who wrought this mischief. Similarly, chap. ii. 4 tells of "false brethren privily brought in," whilst in the 11th and following verses we read that St. Peter, so little perfection or infallibility was there then in the "Fisherman," had to be "resisted to the face, because he stood condemned"—because his shuffling and inconsistency had been marked and censured—and that even Barnabas had been carried away with their dissimulation. In chap. iii. 1 these Christians of Galatia are spoken of as "bewitched;" in chap. iv. 9 as "turning back again to the weak and beggarly rudiments" which could only enslave them and rob them of their Saviour; in ver. 20 St. Paul says he is "perplexed" about them. In chap. v. 12 he could wish that the authors of all this trouble "would even cut themselves off," whilst in ver. 21 he has to tell them again what, it appears, he has told them before, that those who practise fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, sorcery, drunkenness, and the like "shall not inherit the kingdom of GOD." It is clear, then, that such vices were by no means unheard of in the church. In the Epistle to the

CHAP. X.

Ver. 17.

Chap. i. 7.

Ver. 9.

Vers. 8, 9.

Chap. v. 2, 4.

CHAP. X.

Ephesians he has to entreat the Christians in that city, who "once lived in the lusts of the flesh," to walk worthy of their calling, and not to walk any longer as other Gentiles, "giving themselves up to lasciviousness and working all uncleanness with greediness;" he has to beg them to "put away lying;" to forswear all fornication and uncleanness; to guard against drunkenness, and he has to warn them, as we have seen he warned the Galatians, that sins of uncleanness exclude men from the kingdom of GOD. In the church at *Philippi* he finds but little to blame, but the very exhortations to holiness, the warnings against evil workers and false teachers, the mention of those who are "the enemies of the cross of CHRIST" and "whose god is the belly," show that that church, like the others, had had its troubles and its blemishes. The Epistle to the *Colossians* testifies to the prevalence of false teaching, and that on the part of men of "fleshly mind," men who had lost their hold on the church's Head; and it shows that in this, as in the other churches, fornication and uncleanness, in which the members had once lived and walked, still threatened and indeed sometimes soiled their religious life. We gather, too, that the members needed to be warned against "shameful speaking" and lying. The First Epistle to the *Thessalonians*, the first written of all the Epistles, contains the invariable denunciation of fornication, with respect to which the Apostle had already given them charges through the LORD JESUS; it also contains an exhortation to keep the peace amongst themselves, and it reveals the existence of disorderly members. In like manner, the Second Epistle tells of "brethren," of church members, who walked disorderly, and discarded the Apostolic tradition. Some of these brethren, moreover, were

Chap. ii. 3. Chap. iv. 1. Ver. 19. Ver. 25. Chap. v. 3. Ver. 18. Chap. v. 5. Chap. i. 27; ii. 3, 12–15. Chap. iii. 2. Vers. 18, 19. Chap. ii. 8, 18. Chap. iii. 7. Ver. 5. Ver. 8. Ver. 9. Chap. iv. 3–9. Ver. 2. Chap. v. 13. Ver. 14. Chap. iii. 6.

busybodies, and would not work and earn their own bread. In the First Epistle to *Timothy* mention is made at the commencement of false teachers, and a little farther on we find that some of the Ephesian Christians had "made shipwreck concerning the faith," and that some had been delivered by St. Paul unto Satan because of their blasphemies. In the appointment of deacons, again, the Apostle finds it necessary to stipulate that they shall not be given to much wine nor greedy of filthy lucre; he goes on to warn Timothy that men will fall away from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils; he instructs him to reprove openly those who sin; he says that some have been already led astray from the faith by the love of money, and he renews his warnings against corrupt teachers who were destitute of the truth. In the Second Epistle we are startled to learn that "all that are in Asia" have turned away from St. Paul—so lightly was his Apostolic authority esteemed: possibly the consequence of those "profane babblings" of Hymenaeus, Philetus, and others, men who affirmed that the "resurrection was past already," and so "overthrew the faith of some." And it is hardly less startling to find that he thinks it necessary to caution Timothy against "youthful lusts." Here, too, as elsewhere, we read of Christians who opposed themselves. In chap. iv. 3 St. Paul foresees a time when "men will not endure the sound doctrine, but having itching ears, will heap to themselves teachers after their own lusts." Finally, in iv. 16 he complains—and what a condition of things does this reveal—that not a Christian in Rome stood by him in his first defence. The Epistle to *Titus* provides that bishops must not be "brawlers" or "strikers," from which we infer that neither brawling nor striking was unknown

CHAP. X.

Chap. i. 3-8.
Vers. 19, 20.
Chap. iii. 8.
Chap. iv. 1.
Chap. v. 20.
Chap. vi. 10.
Chap. vi. 3-6.
Chap. i. 15.
Chap. ii. 16-19.
Chap. ii. 22.
Ver. 25.

CHAP. X.

amongst the saints. Nor can we wonder at it when we hear from chap. i. 10 of the "many unruly men, vain talkers and deceivers," whose teaching overthrew entire houses, and whose religion was but a cloak for their covetousness, and when we are reminded later on that all alike, teachers and hearers, but a short time before had been "serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another." Such is, in brief, the testimony of the Pauline Epistles as to the moral and spiritual condition of the churches founded, visited, and governed by the Apostles themselves. If I do not cite the language of the Catholic Epistles in confirmation of the view here advanced, it is simply to spare the reader. But if he cares to pursue the subject for himself, the following texts—St. Jam. iii. 14–16; iv. 1–4; v. 9; 1 Pet. ii. 1–11; iv. 3; 2 Pet. ii. 1–3, 10–22; iii. 3–16; 1 John i. 6; ii. 9, 18, 19; iii. 4–7; iv. 2 sqq.; v. 16; 2 John 7, 10; 3 John 9, 10, Jude, *passim*, taken in connection with those already quoted, will satisfy him that the congregations of the Apostolic age were at the least as carnal and corrupt, and were also as much depraved by false teachers, as those of later times, and certainly as much as the Church of this country has ever been within the last three hundred years.

Ver. 11.

Chap. iii. 3.

But I now proceed to remark that

2. *Some of the Churches with which the Apostles were conversant were grossly corrupt.* We now turn to the Epistles to the Corinthians. I take these separately, because the Corinthian congregation stands pre-eminent amongst the churches to which St. Paul wrote for its depravity, and that within some five years after its foundation. We gather from chap. i. 10, 12, that it was a prey to contentions and factions; so much so that in chap. iii. 3

he pronounces the church members *as a class* not "spiritual" but "carnal." From chap. iv. 6–19, we learn that some of them were puffed up and inflamed even against the Apostle who had founded their church. But these are comparatively trifling matters, for chap. v. reveals to us a depth of wickedness, which, but that it is recorded here, we should have thought impossible in any Christian community. It was not merely that there was fornication amongst them, and such fornication as was not even amongst the Gentiles; the terrible feature of the case was that this frightful incest, instead of shocking inexpressibly the whole church, met with a considerable amount of sympathy and allowance. "Ye are puffed up, and did not rather mourn." Indeed, it would seem from ver. 6 that some had actually *gloried* in the crime. He has to charge these members of CHRIST, consequently, not to keep company with fornicators and the like, though they were of the number of the brethren. In chap. vi. we see these primitive Christians going to law, brother against brother, and that before the infidels. In ver. 9 he has to warn them for the third time against fornication—and more, against unspeakable abominations, and he pursues this subject throughout the rest of the chapter. In chap. viii. he has to caution them no less against participation in idolatry. From chap. xi. we learn that even their assemblies for worship were dishonoured. In addition to the divisions and heresies, which set them by the ears, and to which he here recurs for the third time, he says that their *Agapes* and Eucharists were degraded by gluttony and drunkenness. Their misconduct and irreverence were such, he affirms, as to bring on them the temporal judgments of GOD. Nor were the "prophesyings"

Ver. 2.

Vers. 9–13.

Vers. 6, 7.

Cf. chap. x. 14.

Vers. 18, 19.

Chap. xiv. 30.

CHAP. X.

free from disorder, whilst—to pass by minor irregularities—he tells us that some of the brethren actually denied that there was any resurrection of the dead.

Chap. xv. 12.

It may seem superfluous after this to cite further evidence from the *second* Epistle, and yet it may be well that the reader should recognise that the Apostle had forborne to visit the churchmen of Corinth, because if he did, he could not spare them; that he had written instead "out of much affliction and anguish of heart, with many tears;" that he complains of the "false apostles and deceitful workers," "ministers of Satan" who are undermining his work; that he fears lest he may find when he visits them that he has to "mourn over those who have not repented of the *uncleanness and fornication and lasciviousness* which they have committed;" that he threatens those who have sinned and all the rest, that, if he does come, he will not spare, and finally that he is constrained to appeal to them all to try themselves whether they were in the faith at all, or whether they were reprobate.

2 Cor. i. 23. Chap. ii. 4. Chap. xi. 13. Chap. xii. 21. Chap. xiii. 5.

Such was the state of religion in what we may call the premier church of Greece—for Corinth was then "the eye of Greece"—within thirty years of the ascension of our LORD and the founding of His church. It will hardly be denied, in the teeth of this evidence, that this particular church was honeycombed with corruption. And we know from Rev. ii. iii., that there were other Christian societies, at a not much later period, which were in a similar condition. It is abundantly clear, therefore, that some of the churches founded, ordered, and ruled by the Apostles themselves, were, during the lifetime of the Apostles, in a state of such profound disorder,

that—to use Calvin's words—"Satan seemed to hold sway there rather than GOD." Yet

3. *Corrupt as these churches were, the Apostles invariably recognise them as the churches of GOD.* On 1 Cor. i. 2. It is needless to cite a string of Scriptures to prove that the Christian communities brought before us in the Acts and the Epistles, imperfect as they all were and grossly impure as some of them were, are nevertheless everywhere called "churches of GOD" or "churches of CHRIST." That is so, but it is needless to prove it, because the one case of Corinth will cover all the rest. It is enough for our present purpose to know that a community in which some men taught openly that there was no resurrection of the dead, and in which others gloried in incest, was nevertheless pronounced by the Apostles of CHRIST, men full of the HOLY GHOST, "the church of GOD which is in Corinth." If that was still "*the* church," the one church of the Most High in that city, other congregations in other cities were the same. We next observe that 1 Cor. i. 2 xi. 22; 2 Cor. i. 1.

4. *Being the churches of GOD, notwithstanding their corruptions, the Apostles could not, and certainly, as a matter of fact, did not leave them, nor did they counsel or permit others to leave them.* I say, in the first place, that the Apostles *could* not leave them. How could they, so long as they recognised them as the societies which CHRIST loved and for which He gave His life; so long as they saw in the members the members of a body of which He was the Head; so long as in any sense these members formed "the Church of the living God?" To leave them would be to fight against GOD, or at least to contradict His plans and methods. Anyhow, be that as it may, the Apostles never did leave them. If they did, if a single instance can be alleged of any Nonconformity Acts xx. 28; Eph. v. 23.

CHAP. X.

on their part, let it be produced and we have no more to say. But it cannot be produced. Steeped as the church at Corinth was up to the ears in shameful schism and sensuality, St. Paul never breathes one whisper about secession. It is the last idea to occur to his mind. His plan is always a very different one; it is the plan of patiently and courageously labouring for reform. He will visit the church, if necessary, with a rod; he will excommunicate the immoral and unruly members; he will have the right-minded admonish the heretic and the evil doer, and if he is obdurate, reject him, hold aloof from him, put him out of their company, but that he or others must *leave*, and set up an opposition church because of these errors and abominations, never enters his mind. I affirm again—and I respectfully invite our Nonconformist brethren to correct me if I am wrong—I affirm that from the beginning of the Acts to the end of the Epistles, and indeed of the Apocalypse, there is nowhere to be found the faintest suggestion of Dissent. The idea is as foreign to all the thoughts and conceptions of the twelve Apostles of the Lamb, as we have seen it to be to the mind of our LORD Himself. The next step in the argument is this—

1 Cor. iv. 21. *ib.* v. 4, 5; 1 Tim. i. 20; Gal. i. 8, 9. 2 Thess. iii. 14; Titus iii. 10. Rom. xvi. 17; 2 Thess. iii. 6, 14; 1 Tim. vi. 5.

5. *That if ever secession from a Christian church, from* THE *church of the city or country, is lawful or necessary, then secession from the church at Corinth was both.* We are told that Nonconformity is sometimes necessitated by the requirements of the work of GOD, and is sometimes rendered inevitable by the corruptions of the church. I will state this argument in the words (already cited in chap. iv.) of one of its most judicious advocates, Professor Beet. "The necessities of the work of GOD," he says "have compelled them [the Wesleyans] to assume

the position of an independent church, with all the ordinances committed by CHRIST to His church."[1] But we want to know—and I invite a plain answer to this question—in what way secession can advance the work of God *now*, more than in the first century? In other words, what necessities for separation, necessities connected with the advancement of religion, existed in the last century, or exist in the present, which did not equally exist in Corinth, say in the year A.D. 59?[2] Of course this argument assumes that the work of GOD *can* be advanced by division; the *a priori* view would naturally be that that Divine work would be advanced by *union* and retarded or destroyed by division. If "union is strength," is it not strength in spiritual as well as in secular concerns? Let us allow, however, for the sake of argument, that the necessities of the work of GOD in these latter days have compelled division; then we want to know why, if Nonconformity is so helpful, there was none in the Apostles' days? Why did not St. Paul or St. Peter initiate it? Why did they not enlarge on the salutary effect of competition? Surely no church has ever stood more in need of every possible assistance than the church of Corinth; surely no age has ever required more auxiliaries and a more perfect machinery than that first age did. If unity fetters the action of Christians, if

[1] I have already dealt with this and the following objection in *Church or Chapel*, pp. 100–4. But it seems desirable, for the convenience of the reader, briefly to meet it again here.

[2] We may possibly be reminded that the Church is "established" now, and that then it was "free." But was the early Church free from State control? It was not free from State *persecution*. Let us grant, however, for the sake of argument, that establishment, such as it is, does impair the Church's efficiency. Then that is an argument for *dis*establishment, but it is no argument for secession.

CHAP. X.

it prevents wholesome competition and the rest, then why did not the Apostle Paul discard it—he had every excuse, every *reason*, we may say, for discarding it—at Corinth? I say, again, if Nonconformity has ever been necessary to advance the kingdom of our LORD, then Dissent from that corrupt communion at Corinth was necessary. And yet there is no trace of it. Divisions are mentioned indeed, but only to be sternly reprobated and denounced. But let us turn to Professor Beet's second argument in favour of separation. "It is true," he says, "that the New Testament speaks only of 'one body.' But many things have happened which its writers never foresaw, *e.g.*, the corruptions which occasioned the Protestant secessions and the events which occasioned English Nonconformity." But the obvious answer to this is—First, that if the Apostles did not foresee these precise corruptions, the corruptions of the Papacy (which, by the way, did *not* lead, as we have already proved, to any "secession" on the part of the English Church: they led to Reformation, not separation: what the Reformers did was to protest *and remain;* what the Dissenters have done is to protest and *withdraw*); if they did not foresee Roman errors (though the Spirit which moved them must surely have done this), or if they did not foresee the events which occasioned English Nonconformity—we can hardly forbear a smile when we remember how infinitely little some of these were—the ring in marriage, kneeling at the Lord's Supper,[1] the observance of holy days, the surplice, the occasional

Church in the West, Dec. 1, 1888.

[1] Ball, the Nonconformist (died 1640), in his answer to Canne, the Separatist, has to argue that "it is lawful and in some cases necessary to receive the sacrament with them that kneel in our assemblies" (p. 117). See also *The Nonconformists' Advocate*, 1680, and *Nonconformists no Schismatics*, 1670.

reading of lessons from the Apocrypha, the use of a liturgical form, the sign of the cross in Baptism, perhaps the Book of Sports and the Act of Uniformity[1]—they did foresee, because they foretold, corruptions and trials at least as great as these. Why, their pages ring with predictions of the "perilous times" in store for the church; of the "false teachers" and the "damnable heresies" which should afflict it. They spoke of these things at large, and yet they never said one word about the duty or the remedy of secession. On the contrary, as we shall see presently, they are loud in their exhortations to unity; they earnestly warn their converts against a "schism in the body." I submit that only one inference is possible, alike from their silence about secession and their exhortations to union, and that is that Dissent is not a remedy recognised by GOD; it is that Nonconformity is contrary to Christianity. And this becomes still more evident when we remember, secondly, that whether or not the Apostles foresaw the corruptions of later ages, they most certainly saw, for they themselves *describe*, the frightful abuses which afflicted the early church. It is no argument to tell us that the Apostles did not recognise such a thing as a Nonconformist church, only because they did not foresee the events which have occasioned English Nonconformity, for I answer that they saw with their own eyes things far worse than these in the church of their own age. I say distinctly "far worse than

2 Tim. iii. 1.

2 Pet. ii. 1.

[1] "The grievances complained of in the Millenary petition . . . included certainly the cap and surplice and the ring in marriage, but they did not touch on the Royal Supremacy or on Episcopacy. They objected to portions of the Baptismal Service and to Confirmation; they wished the LORD'S day to be kept more holy; they asked for a more godly ministry, and for a restoration of Church discipline," &c. Skeats, pp. 28–9.

CHAP. X.

these," because whatever have been the shortcomings and blemishes of the English Church in the last three hundred years—and I might freely admit that these have not been few or inconspicuous—yet no sane man will contend that they have exceeded the corruptions of the churches of Corinth and of Sardis. Even at the time of the Restoration, or during the Georgian era, none of our clergy preached publicly that the "resurrection was past already;" none of
1 Cor. xii. 3. our prophets pronounced Jesus accursed; none of our members rejoiced in the iniquity of incest. The Christians, or some of the Christians of Corinth, did however. Yet St. Paul never advises, never suggests, never even hints at secession. But we now arrive at our last proposition, which is

6. *That if the Apostles neither seceded nor counselled secession from the churches of the first century, then secession from the English Church at any period of her history during the last three centuries is contrary to and is condemned by the example of the Apostles.* It is needless to enlarge on this. It is the inevitable conclusion from what has gone before. But I will take this opportunity of asking Nonconformist Christians to consider whether there is not a prodigious difference between the attitude of the inspired Apostles—to whom it was promised that "the Spirit of truth should guide them into all truth"—"into *practical* truth when organising the church as well as into *speculative* truth when preaching the gospel"[1]—and all the ideas and conceptions of Nonconformity, I might almost say of latter-day Protestantism.[2] We have seen a great religious

[1] Dr. Liddon, *A Father in God.*

[2] "The doctrine of the Church has been nearly erased with many of us, not indeed from our Creed, but from our practical apprehension of religion."—Gladstone, *Church Principles*, p. 118.

community, the Scottish Kirk, cleft in twain over a mere question of patronage. We have seen secession from the Free Kirk threatened, because an individual minister was supposed to be unsound in the faith. Methodism has been broken into fragments over questions of camp meetings and "fly sheets," whilst in the Church of Rome, as Dr. Döllinger remarked, Christians have swallowed the doctrine of Papal Infallibility rather than risk a schism. I venture to ask Nonconformists to consider which comes nearer to the example of the Apostles. But I will go farther. I will ask: Could these secessions have ever taken place, if men had not overlooked that example? Is it possible that they could have sacrificed the unity of the Church with such a light heart if they and the Apostles had not parted company? And I will conclude this already lengthy paper with one question, to which I most respectfully await an answer, and it is this: On what grounds can secessions from the English Church—or if you prefer it, from the Parish Churches of England—within the last three hundred years be justified when our LORD and His Apostles are silent as to separation from the churches of Rome and Corinth and Laodicea?

"He who reads the Scriptures diligently, and as a whole, can hardly fail to be struck with the difference between their tone respecting the *Ecclesia* or Church and that of modern teachers in general. . . . Some regard it as little more than a sort of religious club."—*Ibid.*, pp. 96, 99.

CHAPTER XI.

NONCONFORMITY CONTRARY TO THE PRECEPTS OF THE APOSTLES.

"It is only when our love grows cold that we can think of separating from our brethren. . . . It is the nature of love to unite us together, and the greater the love the stricter the union."—Wesley, *Sermon on Schism*, Works, vi. 406.

"Church division is a sin. . . . And it is yet the more heinous that it is commonly fathered upon God. If a drunkard or whoremonger should say, 'God commandeth me to do it and I serve God by it,' would you not think this a horrid aggravation? When did you ever know a sect or party, how contrary soever amongst themselves, but they all pretended God's authority and entitled Him to their sin, and called it His service and censured others as ungodly or less godly that would not do as bad as they. . . . Why is it that sober people are so free from the sins of swearing, drunkenness, and fornication, but because these sins are under so odious a character as helpeth them easily to perceive the evil of them? And till church divisions be as rightly apprehended as whoredom and swearing and drunkenness are, they will never be well cured."—Baxter, *Christian Ecclesiastes*, Part III. ch. viii.

CHAP. XI.

IF "example speaks *louder* than precept," precept has at least this advantage, that it can and often does speak more *distinctly* than example; it can teach, that is to say, more fully and explicitly. I think we shall find that, significant and emphatic as is the attitude of the Apostles with regard to separation, their exhortations and instructions are still more decisive.

It must, however, be admitted at the outset that if we approach the apostolic writings with the

expectation of finding therein *express* warnings against Dissent, we shall be disappointed. Of dissuasives even from Dissent, as such, we shall find none. What we shall find is—counsels and admonitions which, if obeyed, would make Dissent an impossibility.

And why is it that we find no specific prohibitions of Dissent? If Nonconformity is, as we have affirmed it to be, directly "contrary to Christianity," surely in that case (it may be argued) we shall find the Apostles forbidding it. But we do not find them so doing. And why? Because Dissent, as we know it, never entered into the minds of the Christians of those days. They are not told, except indirectly, not to form separate communions, because separation was a thing which was altogether foreign to their ideas. How could men contemplate it in the infancy of the church, in the days of persecution, when the very existence of the faith under GOD depended on their hanging together? How could they think of such a thing, when they had the world to convert; how could they hope that anybody would listen to them if from the first they showed a divided front? It would have been strange, therefore, if the Apostles had multiplied prohibitions of secession, when secession was what no Christian dreamed of. They had no idea, as we have already seen, of separating from the *Jewish* church,[1] much less from the new communion and brotherhood of CHRIST.

And, in considering what the Epistles say or leave unsaid, both on this and other questions, it must always be borne in mind that these Epistles are not formal theological treatises, nor do they

[1] See pages 74, 75, above.

CHAP. XI.

make any pretence to be exhaustive expositions of doctrine; they are, as the name implies, mere letters, "occasional writings," in an "unsystematic form,"[1] called forth by the varying circumstances of the churches or persons to whom they were addressed. It is obvious, therefore, that we cannot hope to find in them a discussion of all the doctrines, or even of the leading doctrines or duties of our religion. On the contrary, cardinal doctrines and primary duties are about the last things we should expect to find mentioned, except incidentally; and that just because they were everywhere recognised and allowed. Christians had been taught these things by word of mouth long before a line of the New Testament was penned. "These truths," says Dr. R. W. Dale,[2] "were safe, and the Epistles generally deal with the truths which were in danger. From the very nature of the Apostolic writings those truths which belong to the essence of the Christian creed are, for the most part, implied rather than explicitly taught." What we rather look to find in the Epistles, consequently, is—directions about things which were disputed, decisions on questions which were then agitating the church, such, for example, as the relations of Christians to the idolaters around them, to the civil power, to the poor saints; or such, again, as the instant coming of the LORD, or marriage during the present distress. It is because Dissent is not one of these questions—because it was then never contemplated—that it finds no mention in these letters.

1 Cor. viii. 10. Rom. xiii. 2. Cor. viii. 9. 1 Thess. v.; 2 Thess. ii. 1 Cor. vii.

But (it may be said) though there was no Dissent at that date, yet the Holy Spirit who spake by the Apostles knew that, in later centuries, separatists

[1] Dr. W. L. Alexander.
[2] *The Atonement*, p. 22.

from the Church would be counted by millions. If, therefore, Dissent is the unchristian thing which we have asserted it to be, surely there will be distinct mention thereof, and clear and repeated cautions against it.

No, the Apostles never mention it by name. It would only have puzzled the disciples had they done so; it might perchance have suggested to those who "preached CHRIST of envy and strife," another way of injuring the work and adding affliction to an Apostle in bonds. Their warnings take a different shape. They forbid Dissent by denouncing the tempers and attitudes out of which it springs. In other words, they strike at the *root* of all secession rather than declaim against its bitter *fruits*. I now proceed to prove that if the counsels of the Apostles had been followed, Nonconformity could never have existed.

It will, I think, be admitted even by those who hold that "separation . . . is an affair of expediency," and that "within certain limits it seems really conducive to edification,"[1] who sneer at "the old opinion of the unlawfulness of separation from a church as a scarecrow to frighten men with,"[2] or hold that, as a matter of fact, it has sometimes been "a great gain to the highest interests of the Kingdom of GOD"[3]—it will be allowed that dissensions, strifes, parties, divisions *within* a church, whether we understand by that word a particular congregation or a national communion, are strenuously forbidden by the principles laid down by the Apostles, and indeed by the fundamental principles of CHRIST'S religion. I do not propose to enlarge upon these

[1] Library of Eccles. Knowledge, ii. 118, quoted by Palmer.
[2] Dr. John Owen, *Gospel Church*, p. 27.
[3] Beet, *Commentary on the Ephesians*, &c., p. 401.

CHAP. XI.

latter at the present moment, simply because what we are now concerned with is the teaching of the *Apostles;* still, I think it right to remind the reader that all strife and divisions amongst Christians are condemned and excluded by the very spirit and *ethos* of Christianity. A religion which was ushered into the world with cries of "Peace upon earth;" whose Gospel is that "the Son of GOD has become the Son of man that we the sons of men might become the *sons of GOD;*"[1] which proclaims that all Christians are "brethren;" which puts the prayer "*Our* Father" into our lips; which, as its "new commandment," enjoins that we should "love one another;" which makes love the distinguishing mark of a disciple; which teaches us to wash each other's feet; which tells us that the way to be first and greatest is to be the servant of all; which reveals to men one Father, one Master, one Spirit, one baptism, one salvation, one heaven, and which—to descend to particulars—pronounces a blessing on the peacemakers; which charges us to love even our enemies; which warns us against judging others, and against beholding the mote in a brother's eye; which bids us leave our gift even at the altar and be first reconciled to our brother before we presume to worship;[2] which prescribes the course to be taken in case a member of the brotherhood does wrong; which requires us to humble ourselves as little children; which regards all Christians as branches in One Vine; and which, finally, reminds us that

St. Luke ii. 14.

St. Matt. xxiii. 8, vi. 9; St. John xiii. 34; xv. 12. Chap. xiii. 35. Ver. 14. St. Mark x. 44. St. Matt. xxiii. 10. Chap. v. 9. Ver. 44. Chap. vii. 1. Ver. 2.

Chap. v. 24.

Chap. xviii. 15-17.

Ver. 4.

St. John xv. 5.

[1] Bp. Beveridge (*Thoughts on Religion*, Art. v.), who, however, has been anticipated herein by Athanasius—"Himself became human that we might become Divine."

[2] "If we must leave our gift at the altar till we are reconciled to *one* offended brother, what a gift is theirs who are unreconciled to almost all the churches of Christ!"—Baxter, *Cure of Church Divisions*, Preface.

"a house divided against a house falleth"—such a religion as this leaves no room for division and estrangement amongst its professors. If these exist, it is in defiance of and at the expense of this religion of charity. St. Luke xi. 17.

But we are now treating of the ideas and principles of the *Apostles:* to these then let us turn. And, first, we observe that the general precepts of the Gospels which we have just cited are echoed and reproduced in the Epistles. It is needless to cite testimonies at length—no Nonconformist, so far as I know, disputes this—it will suffice to give the references cited in the margin. I think it will be conceded by every candid student of these Scriptures—and these are but samples of many more—that the keynote of Christianity is unity, concord, fervent charity and patience, and that dissensions and divisions are utterly opposed to Christianity.[1] But it is not only by these *general* exhortations to unity that divisions are condemned; the Epistles abound in *express* warnings against them. Such are to be found in Rom. xvi. 17, where St. Paul "beseeches" the brethren at Rome to "mark them which are causing the divisions,[2] and to "turn away from them;" in 1 Cor. i. 10—and it is noticeable that the largest number of these admonitions are found in connection with the church at Corinth, the church from which, if from any, a secession might have been excused—where he again beseeches the Christians, and this time "in the name of our LORD JESUS CHRIST," that they "all speak the same thing, that there be *no divisions*[3] amongst them," and that they

Rom. xii. 9, xiii. 8, xiv. 19, xv. 1-7; 1 Cor. x. 24, xiii. xiv. 1; Gal. v. 13, 14, vi. 1, 2; Eph. iv. 2, 32, v. 2; Phil. ii. 2; Col. ii. 2, iii. 12; 1 Thess. iii. 12, iv. 9, v. 14; 1 Tim. v. 10; Heb. xiii. 1; 1 Pet. i. 22, ii. 17, iii. 8, iv. 8; 2 Pet. i. 7; 1 John iii. 11, 14, 16, iv. 7, 12, 21; 2 John 5.

[1] "There is nothing more unnatural to religion than contentions about it."—Whichcote.

[2] In the Greek, *dichostasia;* that is to say, *standing apart.*

[3] Greek, *schismata;* literally, *rents, tears.*

CHAP. XI.

1 Cor. i. 11-13.

be perfected together in the same mind and in the same judgment." He has heard that there are contentions and factions amongst them. He says these things may not be; he denounces and forbids them. "Is CHRIST divided?" he cries, "or were ye baptized into the name of Paul?" In the third chapter he pronounces the Corinthians generally to be "carnal" because of the "jealousy and strife" which raged in the church; because of their party cries and sectarian tendencies; because one said he was of Paul, and another he was of Apollos, and so forth. In chap. xii. 12–26, he tells these same carnal churchmen that they are nevertheless members of one and the same holy "body" or community: "Ye are the body of CHRIST and severally members thereof," and then proceeds to show that it is against the plan and purpose of GOD that there should be any "schism," any *rent* or *division* in this body, any more than in our mortal bodies. In Gal. v. 20, again, he brands "divisions" (*dichostasiai*) and "heresies"—the Revised Version gives the true meaning, "parties,"[1] —as "works of the flesh;" he classes them with fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, &c. Surely no further proof is needed that dissensions and factions *within a church* are condemned by the principles and injunctions of the Apostles.

I say "*within* a church," for I here assume that the terms *schisma*, *dichostasia*, and *haeresis* all refer, not to any acts of secession from the Christian community,[2] but to divisions made within its borders. I do not allow that this meaning is inherent in the words. I agree with Baxter that there may be "a

[1] Compare Acts v. 17, "the *sect* of the Sadducees," xv. 5; xxiv. 5; xxvi. 5; xxviii. 22, &c.

[2] I understand the words of Jude 19, "These are they who *make separations*," to refer to acts of apostasy.

schism *from* a church as well as a schism *in* a church," but still I incline to think that what St. Paul was combating when he used these words was not Dissent so much as dissension and consequent alienation. I do not think he is arguing against Dissent, because I cannot find that any such thing existed in the apostolic age, and because his language clearly points to factions *within* the community—he speaks of "divisions among you," "contentions among you," &c. But whether this is so or not, I assume that what he is forbidding is—divisions and parties within the church. I think it well to say this, because it is a constant contention with Nonconformists that Churchmen persistently misinterpret the word "schism."[1] They say we identify it with Dissent, with the "rupture of the Church into distinct communities," whereas it always refers to "internal differences."[2] I hasten, therefore, to say that I accept their view: in other words, I allow that the divisions of the early church had not resulted in secessions. We are agreed, for the purpose of this argument, that what St. Paul condemns is all dissension and separation, all factions and followings, *within* a congregation, and we have seen that he denounces all such as distinctly anti-christian.

1 Cor. i. 10, 11, iii. 3.

But if this is so—that even divisions which do not lead to an absolute rupture, to a suspension of communion, are unsparingly condemned, then *how much more schisms and dichostasies which do result in a severance;* divisions which proceed to such extremities that the members of the same church can no longer agree to worship GOD together; that some of them refuse to remain in the same communion

[1] See, for example, Dykes, *The Christian Church*, p. 182.

[2] This view is taken by Wesley, among others, in his *Sermon on Schism*, vol. vi. 401.

CHAP. XI.

and insist on belonging to different "churches." I have remarked that Dissenters frequently assume that the question of schism is disposed of—anyhow it is dismissed by them as a bugbear, a "scarecrow"—when they have satisfied themselves that the word is used in the New Testament of dissensions amongst members of the same church. They seem to think it has no bearing whatever on the question of secession, whereas this view really furnishes an overpowering argument against Dissent. The argument is this—that divisions which result in an open breach, which create a public scandal, which actually *split up* the Church and leave it in ruins, must be more sinful, more damnable than dissensions which stop short of this. If division *within* the Church is condemned, then, *a fortiori*, separation *from* it.

And here I turn aside for a moment to instance one conspicuous inversion of this argument. We have seen that St. Paul condemns parties and party cries. He denounces men as carnal for ranging themselves under the banner of Apollos or Cephas, or for proclaiming themselves the followers of himself. "Was Paul crucified for you?" he indignantly asks. And yet, in spite of this warning, we find men—and earnest Christian men too—at the present day deliberately calling themselves "Wesleyans," or "Lutherans," or "Calvinists," or professing themselves partisans of Kilham or O'Bryan, and glorying in the deed. And when we proceed to ask whether Wesley was crucified for them, or whether they were baptized into the name of Luther, they say that that was quite a different thing; they tell us that what St. Paul condemned was factions and names within the church, not sects and denominations. But the answer is obvious and irrefutable: if it was carnal and unchristian to bestow this man's name, or that,

on any party within the church, then how much more on any communities which claim to be churches. If it was sinful to say "I am of the party of Paul," how can it be Christian to say "I am a Wesleyan," or "I belong to the Wesleyan Church"?

But, to resume our argument, it will be said that St. Paul's words do not condemn a peaceful withdrawal from the church, a secession which involves no dissensions, which is carried out without either strife or jealousy. Yes, but (even if this were so) we should like to ask when, in all the chequered history of the church, this peaceful and amiable secession took place? Was there ever, can there ever be, Dissent without wrangling beforehand and strife and envying afterwards? Dissent, in fact, is ever born of dissension. Did the Brownists separate peaceably? Were the Martin Mar-Prelate tracts an incident of quiet and dignified withdrawal? Did the severance of the Baptists involve no dissensions and leave no soreness? if so, how does it come to pass that they were so often "well whipt" by the Puritans?[1] Is it asserted that the Quakers made an amiable separation? But that is not the impression which we gain from Fox's Journals. He is constantly telling us how he was "moved to go to the steeple house"[2] and denounce "the priest" to

[1] "Even the best of the Puritans could not endure them, and employed their pens to revile both their characters and their opinions."—Skeats, pp. 20, 21, who also allows that the Baptists attacked the Brownists with scarcely less violence than they did the Church, p. 20.

[2] See, for example, p. 75, "I espied the great steeple house [at Nottingham] and the LORD said to me, 'Thou must go cry against yonder great idol and against the worshippers therein;'" p. 78, "After I had reproved them for their blasphemous expressions, I went away, for I perceived they were Ranters;" pp. 80, 100, "The word of the LORD came to me again, saying, 'Cry, woe unto the bloody city of Lichfield.' So I went up and

CHAP. XI.

his face, and we know that their separation was so much resented by Presbyterians and Independents that hundreds of them were "whipped, imprisoned, and pilloried" during the Commonwealth.[1] Or is it in the successive secessions of Methodists that we are to discover this separation without strife? Why, it is matter of history that the very *question* of separation was a constant bone of contention in the United Societies.[2] And when after Wesley's death the severance was made, when the preachers, that is to say, began to administer the sacraments, the connexion itself was almost convulsed by it. So that that separation was not without strife, even amongst the *seceders*, whilst the soreness and vexation which it produced among Churchmen may be sometimes traced in their language even at the present day. And it is to be considered here—and this is an aspect of secession which is constantly overlooked—

down the streets, crying *Woe to the bloody city of Lichfield;*" pp. 102, 103, 104, "I was moved of the LORD to speak the word of the LORD to this Papist. So I went to Papist's house and declared against his religion and all their superstitious ways;" p. 106, "I laid open the Ranters, ranking them with the old Ranters in Sodom." Similar extracts might be made to any extent.

[1] Skeats, *History of the Free Churches*, p. 55, says: "Had they abstained from attacking other sects, they would probably, in the time of the Commonwealth, have been left alone, but when they attended places of worship and publicly assailed both the preachers and their doctrines they excited an animosity which fell little short of fury. . . . During the Protectorate, three thousand one hundred and seventy-three Quakers were imprisoned, thirty-two of whom died in confinement. Their persecutors were for the most part Presbyterians and Independents."

[2] "I stay not so much to do good as to prevent evil. I stand in the way of my brother's violent counsellors, the object of both their fear and hate. . . . The restless pains of bad men to thrust me out from the Methodists seems a plain argument for my continuing with them."—C. Wesley, *Letter to Rev. S. Walker*, Aug. 21, 1756.

that every such separation affects two parties, those who secede and those who stay, and if it is to be peaceful and harmonious, then there must be peace and approval on both sides. Whatever the temper, whatever the attitude and actions of the dissentients, it cannot be called a "peaceful separation" if it breeds anger and resentment on the part of the community which they forsake. And every secession does this; it is in the nature of things that it should.[1] We know that it costs a community a pang when even *one* of its members renounces its fellowship; how much more when a number withdraw. If, therefore, I am told that the Wesleyans or the Baptists, or any other denomination, went out peaceably, I ask whether their secession promoted peace and conduced to charity and brotherly love in the Church or Chapel which they deserted. It could not do so. Secession has no doubt sometimes put a stop—at least for a time—to quarrelling, though, as a rule, it has merely transferred the quarrel to the press. But what we are now considering is—whether it has contributed to kindly feeling on the part of the non-seceders. It could not fail to breed ill-will. For every such separation, even if no railing accusations are brought against us, wounds us in a very tender part; it is a direct reflection on ourselves; it is tantamount to saying that we are unfit for them to worship with any longer; it affirms either that our views are wrong or that our ways are corrupt.[2] Nonconformists know very well how inexpressibly distressed

[1] "*Strifes*, natural result of divisions."—Beet on 1 Cor. i. 11.

[2] "They do not pronounce an affirmative judgment against us, yet the very separating is a tacit and practical condemning of our churches, if not as false, yet as impure."—Westminster Assembly of Divines.

CHAP. XI.

they have been by desertions from their ranks—they may recollect some recent cases where the conformity of a single minister to the Church troubled the whole connexion and evoked many angry feelings and injurious words;[1] they will readily believe, therefore, that Churchmen did not view *their* departure with perfect equanimity and complacency. No, there cannot be Dissent without anger, and strife, and jealousy. There never has been, there never will be a peaceful separation. We might as well talk of a "peaceful contention."

And in proof of this statement, if any further proof is needed, I appeal to the secessions already referred to which have from time to time taken place from the Wesleyan Methodist Society. For if separation can ever be unattended with wrangling and bitterness, surely we may expect to find it here. Here were men agreed on every point of doctrine; men, too, who all professed to have been, and many of whom were, "soundly converted," and some of whom claimed to have attained to "Christian perfection," and who merely proposed to change one form of Methodism for another. Surely, if ever secession could be quietly and amicably made, it was in this case. But which of these many splits, we are compelled to ask, was made without wrath and bitterness—that of the Kilhamites, or the Primitives, or the Bryanites, or the followers of Dr. Warren, or the Wesleyan Reformers. It is no great reproach either to the parent body or to its off-shoots to say that each division involved much acrimonious dissension. It would have been strange, it would have been a miracle of grace, had it been otherwise.

[1] The ordination of the Rev. G. S. Reaney produced a crop of letters in the Dissenting journals bitterly reflecting on the capacity and honesty of all such converts.

But suppose we allow that some secessions have taken place without any breach of charity or diminution of good-will and affection; suppose, that is to say, that we cannot charge them with "contentions," still they have produced one result which is equally condemned by the Apostle, they have undeniably culminated in "divisions": they have involved, and, so long as they last, they must involve, a standing-apart. And such standing apart, such separation between the brethren of the LORD — for if not members of the same community (though they were this when the division was made) they are members of CHRIST—is itself "contrary to Christianity"—contrary to its essence, contrary to the express teaching of its Apostles.

And I am glad to be able to cite in support of this position, the words of an admirable Presbyterian, with whom in a former chapter I have unhappily found myself at issue. "The indivisible unity of CHRIST Himself," says Dr. Marcus Dods,[1] "is in Paul's mind the sufficient argument for the unity of the church. If you can divide the one CHRIST, and if one church can live on one part, another on another, then you may have several churches; but if there be but one CHRIST indivisible, then there is but one church indivisible." And again, "Paul does not seem to contemplate as possible that which in our day is the normal condition, a church broken up into little sections, each of which worships by itself and looks upon the rest with some distrust or contempt. It did not as yet appear possible that the members of the one body of CHRIST should refuse to worship their common LORD in fellowship with one another and in one

[1] *Expositor's Bible*, 1 Corinthians i. 13.

CHAP. XI.

place." I am grateful to Dr. Dods for this candid testimony that "our unhappy divisions" and bewildering denominations are directly contrary to the ideas and precepts of the Apostles, which is what in this chapter I am endeavouring to prove.

And I submit that this *is* proven, and proven conclusively, by the following considerations, which sum up the argument in a few words:—

1. All divisions amongst the members of the indivisible CHRIST, even those which do *not* result in any rupture of their relations, any suspension of communion, any open "schism in the body" of CHRIST, are distinctly and repeatedly forbidden by the Apostles.

2. If divisions which stop short of secession are condemned by the Apostles as contrary to Christianity, how much more those which proceed to the length of separation and which tear the Church of GOD in pieces?

3. Dissent is such a division; it not only springs out of strife and ministers to strife, but it creates a permanent and notorious and disastrous breach in the Christian body.

But it may be said—I now proceed to notice some objections—indeed, it very often *is* said, that the Church of England, which is constantly calling Nonconformists to reunion, is herself chiefly to blame for any disunion which may exist amongst the Christians, or at least among the Protestants of England. It is pointed out that the various bodies of Nonconformists can and occasionally do meet for united worship, and we are also reminded that they eagerly embrace such opportunities as offer for working and worshipping with Churchmen, but they say that, when they invite us to *their* assemblies, we always meet them with a *non*

possumus. They charge upon us, consequently, the sin of *dichostasia;* they say that it is *we* who stand aloof, not they; and the Church has had to bear many hard words, many imputations of arrogance and superciliousness, because we will not meet them, as they say, half-way; because we will not recognise them as they recognise us. But a moment's reflection will put the matter in a very different light, and in the true light. The Church has never broken away from these bodies, never deserted their communion; it is they who broke away from us. They said it was against their conscience to remain in the same church with us; they said that the errors or abuses of the Church were such that they *must* separate. In fact, they showed by their action, even more emphatically than by their words, that they "accounted the Christians . . . of the Church of England to be profane and *unmeet for them to join with in* Christian profession."[1] All this is matter of history: we can give the dates when they successively left us and the reasons they assigned for leaving. And now, having left the Church, having refused to worship with us any longer, they turn round upon us and call it uncharitable if we have any scruples about joining and worshipping with them whenever they invite us so to do. They must, they say, openly renounce our communion, for that is what they did and do, and yet it is a crime if we will not openly communicate with theirs. It is in vain they tell us that all they ask of us is to join with them *occasionally,* as they join with us, in the exercises of worship, for we at once reply: If you can, without violating your conscience, join with us *sometimes,* why must you leave us at all? Why, in

[1] Canon ix.

CHAP. XI.

fact, make a breach when your subsequent action shows there was no necessity for it? For I think Dissenters will find it extremely difficult to overthrow the conclusion of the Westminster Assembly, that "to separate from those churches ordinarily and visibly, with whom occasionally you may join without sin, seemeth to be a most unjust separation." They have to face this dilemma: Either we are fit for Christian communion with them or we are not. If we are fit, then why did they withdraw from communion with us: if we are unfit, then why do they summon us to communion when it suits them so to do. Besides, we have a difficulty, or if you like, a conscientious scruple, which Nonconformists have not. With few exceptions they recognise the Church of England as a Church of CHRIST. They say it is one of "the churches." They have no difficulty consequently in allowing and using its offices and ministrations. But we cannot return the compliment, much as we respect their piety, and much as we esteem their good works, simply because it is our firm belief that there is and can be no church but one—*the* church of the place. They believe in polychurchism; we do not, and cannot, and therefore we cannot do what would contradict our belief, what would countenance and perpetuate error. We acknowledge them as Christians and often as most exemplary Christians, but we cannot recognise their communities as churches. And we have at least some Scripture on our side. They themselves allow that the Apostles knew and recognised no church but one. They admit that the church of the New Testament was "one body." Why are we to be denounced as supercilious or uncharitable, because we contend for the primitive plan, the plan, as we believe, once for all delivered to the saints.

And here I may venture to deal with that oft-repeated assertion that the divisions of Churchmen are quite as numerous and as wide as any which separate the Chapel from the Church. It may be that Churchmen do differ widely in their *opinions*—can we ever hope for complete uniformity of views, even amongst members of the same communion? Is there any denomination all the members of which hold the same doctrines? But there is this difference between Churchmen and Dissenters, that the latter have, and the former have not, insisted on making a schism in the body. If Churchmen differ, at any rate they agree to differ; they do not make the breach still wider and the mischief greater by separating from their brethren; they do not publish to the world that their differences, the differences of the "household of God," are such that they can no longer dwell under the same roof or worship in the same way; they do not create a scandal among the heathen and "cause the way of truth to be evil spoken of" by renouncing each other's society. It is Dissent does the mischief and creates the reproach—not dissent. In other words, "it is not the differences of Christians do the harm; it is the mismanagement of those differences."[1] Besides, two wrongs do not make one right. The divisions of Churchmen may be thoroughly unchristian, and still it may be equally true, as I have affirmed it to be, that Nonconformity is contrary to Christianity.

See note 2, p. 137.

[1] Philip Henry.

CHAPTER XII.

NONCONFORMITY CONTRARY TO THE PRINCIPLES OF THE APOSTLES.

"Union is not only an accident of the Church, but is part of its very essence, without which it can be no church, and without which we can be no members of it."—Baxter, *Cure of Church Divisions*, p. 67.

CHAP. XII.

IT may be that the distinction which is drawn in the headings of this and the preceding chapter between the *precepts* of the Apostles and their *principles* is somewhat arbitrary, for the principles of men naturally find expression in their instructions, but I trust it will be excused on the ground of convenience, and as a matter of arrangement. For whilst the last chapter deals exclusively with the exhortations of St. Paul and others to unity, and with their denunciations of strife and division, this will aim at bringing out their teaching, or rather a part of their teaching, as to the constitution, character, and design of the Christian church.

I say "a part of their teaching," because I do not aspire to furnish anything like a complete account of the "church principles" of the Apostles. On the contrary, for the sake of brevity, and to avoid complicated and debated questions, I shall confine myself to two or three of these.

It cannot be said, however, that the principles which I shall pass by modify or alter those with which I shall deal. They would, on the contrary, if honestly considered, materially confirm and enforce

them. I only exempt them from consideration, because this chapter, like the preceding, aspires to be a "Short Method." I am very sensible that in some respects it is too long as it is.

1. I affirm, then, that it was a fundamental principle with the Apostles that *the church forms* "ONE BODY." Just as there is one Spirit, "one LORD, one Faith, one Baptism," and "one GOD and Father of all," so the Christian religion recognises and preaches "one body," and no more. It has no more idea of two or twenty *bodies* than it has of twenty "Spirits" or twenty "Gods and Fathers." However "many" in number Christians may be, still they are to form "one body in CHRIST." Being partakers of the "one bread," they are members of the "one body," even as by "one Spirit they were all baptized into one body." The oneness of the church body, however many and varied the church members, is the basis of the comparison of Christians to members of the human body in 1 Cor. xii. "As the body is *one* and hath many members and all the members of the body, being many, are *one body*, so also is Christ." "Many members, but one body"—that is St. Paul's conception and illustration of the church. The visible church, which is popularly supposed to be made up of a prodigious number of separate "bodies," a "Wesleyan body," and a "Baptist body," and a "Reformed Episcopal body," and a "Roman Catholic body"—there are said to be two hundred and sixty-four of them in all—according to this elect Apostle, should form one body. He tells us that Christians, who are severally members of CHRIST, in the aggregate constitute the body of CHRIST, and in that body there must be no schism. There was not even to be a Jewish church and a Gentile church, for CHRIST has "reconciled both *in one body* unto GOD,

Eph. iv. 3–6.

Rom. xii. 5. 1 Cor. x. 17. Chap. xii. 13.

Ver. 12.

Ver. 20.

Ver. 27.

Ver. 25.

CHAP. XII.

through the cross." The Gentiles were to be "fellow-members of the body." *One* body or society or community—that is a principle with St. Paul. If we have misrepresented his view or misquoted his words, no doubt the careful reader will be able to instance the exact particulars.

Eph. ii. 16. Chap. iii. 6.

But it may be, and indeed it will be said: "You have not misquoted St. Paul's words, but you have misunderstood them. You quietly assume that when he speaks of the church as a 'body,' as, *e.g.*, in Eph. i. 23; iv. 12; Col. i. 18, 24, he is speaking of the visible church, whereas we hold that he is treating of the invisible church, that company of true believers which you call 'the soul of the church;' we understand him to speak of CHRIST'S 'body *mystical*.'[1] That sacred company, no doubt, is one, but one the visible church neither is nor can be."

Now this view is widely and tenaciously held,[2] and therefore it demands our careful consideration. I have now consequently to prove that when St. Paul speaks of the church as a "body," or as "the body of CHRIST," he is thinking exclusively of the *visible* church; he is contemplating the organised society and community of those "who profess and call themselves Christians," whether they are walking worthily[3] of their vocation or not. This is what I now undertake to establish.

[1] It may be well to point out in passing that the term "mystical" does not mean "spiritual" or "invisible." The Church is called a *mystical* body to distinguish it from our LORD'S human body.

[2] By Dr. H. R. Reynolds, for example, who said at the Langham Street Conference—"The Church, which is His body, consists of those who have passed from death unto life." And by Dr. Rigg (*Times*, September 19, 1892)—"The body of CHRIST . . . was and is invisible . . . and has for its members the true Christians who are found in all the churches."

[3] Unless otherwise stated, he assumes that they are so doing.

But, first, let me allow that I have everywhere throughout these papers *assumed* that by the term "body" or "body of CHRIST" the Scripture intends the visible church. I have felt justified in assuming this, though knowing full well that I should be expected to prove it, because it is only assuming that the word, when used of a society, has the same signification in Holy Scripture that it has everywhere else; it is only assuming that the word is to be taken in its ordinary and everyday sense until reason is alleged to the contrary. If I have taken "body" to mean the visible society of professed Christians, I have only understood the word as Nonconformists themselves understand it everywhere but in the Bible. For this is a word which is in constant use amongst religious people, and it is by them invariably used of a visible community. They are perpetually speaking of the "Wesleyan body," the "Baptist body," and so forth, and they invariably mean by these expressions the organised communities of Wesleyans and of Baptists. So that in interpreting the word of the visible church, I have only done what all Christians do when they employ the term of any so-called sections or portions of the church.

Besides, how can we understand the word "body" of that unrecognisable and unorganised company of pious souls which is frequently, though incorrectly, designated the "invisible church," and which ancient writers sometimes call the "veritable church" or the "true body of CHRIST"? how could we suppose that St. Paul calls this a "body," when we remember that it is of the essence of a body to be *visible* and *organised*—which the secret company of true believers certainly is not—and especially when we recollect that the word is contrasted by St. Paul with the

CHAP. XII.

term *Spirit?* "There is one body," he writes, "and one Spirit," the former being the visible, the latter the invisible thing; the former the material frame, the latter the animating principle. To understand "body" here of the spiritual church, consequently, would be to turn his language upside down. Moreover—and this should be conclusive—this word *σῶμα, corpus,* "body," was in common use in St. Paul's day, just as it is in ours, to express a visible society or fraternity. The trade guilds and companies of Rome were commonly spoken of as *corpora, bodies,* just as we speak of a "learned body" or a "mercantile body." It is hard to believe, therefore, that the Apostle can have used a familiar word in a sense directly opposed to its everyday meaning, and that, too, without a syllable to put us on our guard. There is no escape, consequently, from the conclusion that when he speaks of the "body" of CHRIST we are to think of the society or brotherhood of Christians, the community which recognised CHRIST as its Master and Lord and Head, just as the term "Wesleyan body" is used of the united societies which recognise Wesley as their founder and exemplar. To the unprejudiced mind no other interpretation is possible.

Eph. iv. 4; compare 1 Cor. xii. 13.

But if Nonconformists still hesitate to accept this conclusion, then I will remind them that it is unhesitatingly accepted by some of their own most recent and capable scholars. I may instance Dr. Beet, than whom I venture to say the present generation has not produced a more impartial and painstaking expositor. His language is unmistakable. For example, on 1 Cor. xii. 13, "By one Spirit were we all baptized into one body," he writes: "They were made by baptism members of an *outward and visible* community, which has a oneness

similar to that of the human body . . . *Body* in contrast to *Spirit* suggests an *outward and visible* community, and an outward rite of admission to it." And these are his words on Eph. i. 23: A "further description of the church: it is the body of CHRIST, an *outward and visible form*, consisting of various and variously endowed members . . . the *visible organ* of His self-manifestation," &c. I may also cite the learned Dr. Milligan, who defines it as "that body consisting of the Head and members in which the Christian Dispensation is realised and *exhibited* to the eyes of men." And, again, "Our LORD did institute a kingdom, a community, *a body*, which He intended to be visible."

The italics are mine.

Expositor, vol. viii. p. 163. (Third Series.)

I may, therefore, I trust, regard it as proven that when the church is called "a body," in Scripture, it is the visible church, the church *as we know it*, that is referred to, and not the secret company of sanctified souls, the so-called "invisible church." A "body" must have visibility, must have cohesion and union and organisation.[1]

p. 175, cf. p. 176.

And this body, the "body of CHRIST'S church," is said to be *one*. Just as the human body (to which the church is compared) is one; just as the Jewish church was one, and for the greater period of its history was visibly one, so the Christian church *was* one in the first days and was *intended* to be one to all time. There cannot, in fact, be two bodies of CHRIST. There may be "a schism in the body," but never two bodies. Our "one LORD" can never be the Head of two separate and diverse organisms. In that case, as St. Paul says, CHRIST

Cf. "one new man." Eph. ii. 15, 16.

[1] "It is unreasonable to resolve the term 'body' into a metaphor. Not only because we may think that the plain sense of Scripture precludes it, but further also because the whole primitive Church concurred in the literal sense."—Gladstone, *Church Principles*, p. 108.

CHAP. XII.

would be "divided." The "body mystical" can no more have two trunks than two heads.

1 Cor. i. 13.

And when St. Paul wrote and for long afterwards, the body of CHRIST was one; that is to say, it was (like His seamless robe) without rent or tear. All the Christians of Asia, of Europe, belonged to *the* body—none to a sectarian communion. Such a thing as a "body of Cephas" or a "Pauline body" was unheard of; such a thing as a "Presbyterian body" or a "Baptist body" was then inconceivable.

And even after the great schism which unhappily befel the body of CHRIST in the ninth century, and which shattered it much as the Jewish church had been by Jeroboam's sin, the Church in this land remained one and undivided. In spite of the rupture of relations between East and West, there was none amongst the Christians of England, down to the time of the Reformation. No doubt many of the members of the body were ignorant and superstitious, no doubt many were carnal and corrupt—just like the churchmen of Corinth and of Sardis—still they all adhered to *the* body. Diseased though the body was, and distracted as Christendom was, still no one dreamed of any second or separate body of CHRIST. It no more occurred to them that there could be two churches than two CHRISTS.

But now, on the contrary, the one body has been replaced—so we are asked to believe—by over two hundred separate bodies of CHRIST or Christian bodies. Instead of the "one body" of the first days, the body of CHRIST, we have bodies which take their name from fallible men, from a sacrament, or from an order in the Christian ministry. And all these bodies claim to be "churches," churches of the living GOD. Cornwall actually has or has had a "Teetotal Church."

And if we ask how this schism or these successive schisms have been made in the Christian body, only one answer is possible. It is that some of the members said to the rest, "We have no need of you. You are too impure for us to worship with; we renounce you; we withdraw from you." They said this when their motives were of the best, when their uninstructed conscience required them to secede. And when their motives were mean and sordid, when they separated, as some have done, out of pique or envy, then they said, "Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body," or "Because I am not the eye, therefore I refuse to remain in the body." 1 Cor. xii. 15, 16.

But whatever their reasons, they made a schism in the body. The very separation, the Dissent created the schism. The body may have been ever so corrupt—that is another matter—but the fact remains, that Nonconformity has divided the body of CHRIST in England. Whether their views were right or wrong, and they cannot all have been right, because they contradict each other, history shows that Independents, Baptists, Quakers, and the rest each in turn made a schism in the "one body."

So that this is how the matter stands. The idea of Christianity, of our LORD and Master is—one church—"My church" He called it. The church which our LORD here speaks of must have been the visible church. It is that which at Ephesus is called the "church *of GOD;*" and this had *elders.* And "My church" must have comprehended "the church *of GOD,* which is at Corinth and "all the churches *of CHRIST.*" An essential idea of Nonconformity is—a plurality of churches, a variety of bodies. Therefore, Nonconformity is contrary to CHRIST'S Christianity. The contention of St. Paul— St. Matt. xvi. 18. Acts xx. 28. 1 Cor. i. 2. Rom. xvi. 16.

CHAP. XII.

and the other Apostles must have agreed with him —is that all Christians form *one* community. The idea of Dissent is that they may form any number of separated and independent communities. Therefore, Nonconformity is contrary to the principles of the Apostles.

Nor does it invalidate this conclusion to allege that the "body" has been much corrupted since the Apostles' days. I have already dealt with this contention; I will only repeat here that the body was corrupt from the very first—it can never be otherwise than corrupt—but we are never told that its diseases are to be remedied by disruption.[1] Whatever may have happened to it, so long as the Head remains with it, so long as He is not "divided," the principle of "one body" remains unchanged. The one CHRIST cannot have two bodies.

See p. 162.

But it may be objected here: The body of CHRIST is made up of members, of those who "by one Spirit have been baptized into the one body." Many Nonconformists have been so baptized. Why are not they and their churches, therefore, constituent parts of the body? To this we reply: The individual Nonconformist is, if duly baptized, a member of the body. He is not always, any more than many Churchmen are, an intelligent or obedient or healthy member, but a member he is nevertheless; he is, in fact, an unconscious, even if a contumacious Churchman. We do, therefore, recognise him as "a member of CHRIST," but it is quite another thing to recognise his community or society as a church of CHRIST. The moment we do this, we abandon the

1 Cor. xii. 13.

[1] "I am bound to keep the unity of that living body whereof I am a member, even with some inconvenience of sickness and unsound parts, but I must not join myself to a strange body and so become a member of Satan."—Ball, *Answer to Canne*, p. 61.

Apostolic idea of "one body." And we can do this the less because, unhappily—I speak from personal experience—a considerable number of the members of Nonconformist "churches" have never been admitted into *the* Church in the way the Head appointed, have never been baptized into the one body. Some of them even scorn and deride this institution of CHRIST.[1] But even if they had one and all been duly baptized, still the difficulty would remain. We cannot recognise rival churches. It is possible we shall be called illiberal and bigoted, if nothing worse —just because we stand on the old paths. Be it so. Still, we cannot see our way to replacing the "one body," by two, much less by two hundred and sixty "bodies."

St. Matt. xxviii. 19. 1 Cor. xii. 13.

2. I now pass to a second church principle of the Apostles. It was an axiom with them that *the church forms a family, a household, and the household of God.* Christians are all regarded as children of the same GOD and Father.[2] Their constant designation is "the brethren." But if this is not a mere figure of speech; if Christ's disciples are really and truly—what they call themselves — brothers and sisters, then it follows that they are members of one family. Every time, therefore, that the Apostles or Evangelists describe the saints "as brethren" (and they are constantly doing this), we are taught indirectly that the church is GOD's family. But we are not left to bare inference, sure though that inference may be. The visible church is expressly called "the house of GOD" in 1 Tim. iii. 15—I say

St. Matt. vi. 9; Rom. i. 7; Gal. i. 4, &c. St. Matt. xxiii. 8; St. John xxi. 23; Acts xi. 12–29; xv. 1, 3, 23, 33, 40; xvii. 10, 14; xviii. 18, 27, &c.

[1] I need do no more than refer to the "Luton case," which has recently exercised the Wesleyan Conference. Two young persons who declined to be baptized were nevertheless retained, or rather reinstated, as full members of the "Wesleyan Church."

[2] Every time we say the Lord's Prayer, the formula for *disciples*, we profess that the church is one family.

CHAP. XII.

the "*visible* church" (not that any other church ever appears in Holy Scripture), because this is implied by the context, "that thou mayest know how men ought to *behave themselves* in the house of GOD," &c. How can men "behave themselves" before an invisible company of the converted, and how can such a company be "the pillar and ground of the truth?"[1] And if any doubt remained, it would be dispelled if we remember that this expression "house of GOD" is not found here for the first time; it is borrowed from the Old Testament, where it is used of the visible Jewish church.[2] It is true the "house of God" is called by St. Peter a "*spiritual* house," but that it is the visible church that is intended by this term is clear from chap. iv. 17, and indeed from chap. ii. 9, where the "spiritual house" is identified with the "elect race," the "royal priesthood," the "holy nation," terms which must certainly indicate the visible church of CHRIST, seeing that they are quoted from Exod. xix. 6, where they are used of the visible people of Israel. Besides, it is easy to see why the church is called a spiritual house, namely, to distinguish from a *material* or natural house; because the stones are "*living* stones," and because it is "builded for a habitation of GOD *in the Spirit*." It is the visible church, therefore, that is called GOD'S house.[3] And this household of GOD is

Numb. xii. 7; cf. Heb. iii. 4–6.

Heb. x. 21. 1Peter ii. 5.

Eph ii. 22.; cf. 19, 20.

[1] Nonconformist writers—I may mention Dr. W. Lindsay Alexander (*Anglo-Catholicism not Apostolical*, pp. 153–63) as an example—labour hard to prove that it is the "invisible church" here referred to. It may suffice, perhaps, to say that modern exegesis is distinctly adverse to their view.

[2] Both in Old and New Testament "house" constantly stands for "family." Here are a few instances out of many: 1 Sam. iii. 14; xxv. 28; 1 Kings xvii. 15; xxi. 22; Ezek. ii. 5; xii. 2; St. Luke i. 33–69; ii. 4; Acts vii. 42; x. 2; xi. 14; xvi. 31; Heb. viii. 8.

[3] The Westminster Confession describes the "visible Catholic

elsewhere described as "the household of the faith," words which the context shows must refer to the visible community of Christians.

Gal. vi 10.

The church, then, is the house and family of GOD, and Christians are members of the household. But if so, what place is there for secession? It is always a public scandal when members of the same family cannot dwell together in peace. Their opinions may differ, and indeed must differ, but there is no great harm in that; the harm begins when they insist on separating, when they refuse to remain under the same roof, because they don't exactly see alike. The world says it shows a bad state of feeling, and proves them to be an ill-conditioned set, when brothers and sisters, children of the same father and mother, decline to dwell together just because their opinions are not in absolute accord; because they differ on some secondary points, or because some of the brothers are prodigals, or some of the sisters are spiteful. Well, is the separation less shameful when the roof they leave is GOD'S roof, and the household they desert is GOD'S family? Does it mend matters that the children who cannot put up with each other are the sons of GOD? that the opinions which divide them concern the religion of peace and charity, and that they plead their conscience as a reason for breaking up the family life? If the family is GOD'S, what right have they to leave it and found one of their own? So long as He remains the Head, surely they may remain members. It must be a perverted conscience which bids them to go whilst He stays. Similarly, if the Church is "the household of the faith," what can justify men in deserting it to form a household of the "Baptist faith" or the "Wesleyan

Oikeioi, Gal. vi. 10; Eph. ii. 19.

Church" as "the house and family of GOD, out of which there is no ordinary possibility of salvation."

CHAP. XII.

Tit. i. 1. Jude 3.

faith?" Why must they substitute the belief of a sect for "*the* faith of GOD'S elect," "*the* faith once for all delivered to the saints?"[1] I respectfully submit to Nonconformists that if the Church, notwithstanding its inevitable imperfections, is the "house" and "family" of GOD—and it is said to be this in Holy Writ—then, so long as it remains such, nothing can warrant them in leaving it, or, having left it, in keeping away from it.

3. A third church principle of the Apostles was this, that *to maintain the health of the body and the honour of the family, bad members should be put away, not that good members should withdraw.* In other words, the Apostolic remedy for abuses in the church is excommunication, not secession. Or, as Baxter puts it, "To cast out the wicked and impenitent from the Church is a great *duty;* to separate from the Church is a great *sin.*"[2] And he proceeds to say: "If you mark all the texts in the Gospel, you shall find that all the separation which is commanded is . . . (1) Either that the Church cast out the impenitent sinner by the power of the keys, or (2) that private men avoid all private familiarity with them. That private members should separate from the Church, because such persons are not cast out of it, show me one text to prove it, if you can."[3] Let us glance at these texts. The first

[1] Some one has done me the honour to forward me a pamphlet entitled "My Faith," in which the writer tells how he has arrived at his present opinions. It is strange that it never occurs to these well-meaning persons that this man's faith or that must be a matter of comparative indifference to the Christian. What we want for our salvation is not *his* faith, but "*the* faith of the gospel."

[2] *Cure of Church Divisions*, p. 80.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 81—"Neither St. Paul nor any other of the inspired writers ever advised holy men to separate from the Church because the ministers were unholy." Wesley, *Sermon* civ., *Works*, vii. 181.

is—I confine myself to the Epistles—Rom. xvi. 17, "Mark them which are causing the divisions . . . and turn away from them." St. Paul cannot surely mean that "divisions" are to be remedied by further division; what he means is that Christians must not associate with these evil-doers; must "turn away" from their company and counsel, and if they persist must put them out of communion, must account them as heathens and publicans.[1] The injunction is explained, in fact, by 1 Cor. v. 11, where the Apostle forbids the brethren to "keep company" or to "eat" with a brother who is guilty of any flagrant sin. They are not to leave the church on his account, even though the church makes light of his shameful deed; on the contrary, they are to put *him* out of the church, just as St. Paul on another occasion delivered Hymenæus and Alexander unto Satan. So in 2 Thess. iii. 6, 14, 15, there is not a syllable about separation; what he denounces is familiar intercourse with disorderly Christians. From the society of such they are to withdraw; partly for their own safety and protection; partly with a view to reclaiming these offenders—"that they may be ashamed"—partly for the church's sake, that it may not be compromised before the world. In the same way, Titus, at Crete, is not to leave the church because there were heretics in it; he is to put the heretics out of it. Nor do we find that those Christians whom Diotrephes unjustly excommunicated had contemplated secession, because the church had fallen into such hands; on the contrary, such as it was, they esteemed it a hardship to be separated

St. Matt. xviii. 17.

Ver. 2.

Ver. 13.

1 Tim. i. 20; cf. Col. i. 13.

1 Pet. iii. 16.

Tit. iii. 10.

3 John 10.

[1] "Offenders are only to be removed by the rules of Christian discipline. The governors of the Church must judge who are fit for public Church communion; the members who are fit or unfit for private company."—Baxter, *Cure*, 195.

CHAP. XII.

from it. I repeat, therefore, that the Apostolic rule for remedying errors and abuses in the church was —not that the good should leave it, and by leaving it destroy all hope of reform, but—that the evil should be cast out.

But what, you say, if the church declines to cast out the evil-doers? what if discipline is paralysed; what if the authorities either cannot or will not put away the wicked?[1] Why, then, you are to leave it less than ever; then it becomes your sacred duty to abide in the ship, that the ship may be saved. You say it is in a most parlous and unhealthy state. Then you must in no case desert it. It is GOD'S church, and GOD'S church is in danger; what further argument do you want for standing by it and fighting for it? "It is not when I do right, that I most need friends," said M. Casimir Perier—"then I can do without them; it is when I have made mistakes and done wrong that I find their value." The same is true of the church. The worse it is, the less you must think of leaving it. GOD needs your help to reform it.

Acts xxvii. 31.

4. At a fourth church principle of the Apostles, I can but cast a hurried glance. It was a settled principle with them that *the officers of the church were to be obeyed by the members in all things indifferent*—in every matter which did not involve a breach of duty towards God. It could not well be

Acts v. 9.

[1] The Nonconformist Rathband discusses this question in his *Grave and Modest Confutation*. He shows that the neglect of some of the ordinances of CHRIST does not make the church false or anti-Christian; that the substance of discipline is preserved amongst us; that there was a true church in Judah in the time of Asa and Jehoshaphat, though discipline was in abeyance, and a true church at Corinth, though it is blamed for lack of discipline. Similarly Ball (p. 72) shows that the "rulers of Sodom" and "princes of Gomorrah" were still members of the visible church.

otherwise unless they had entirely forgotten the precepts of their Lord. Nor could men who enjoined obedience to magistrates, even though they were as profligate as Tiberius and as venal as Felix, have esteemed the authorities of the church entitled to less respect than those of the State. Anyhow, the Apostles do claim for the elders of the church the submission which is always due to constituted authority. They speak of them as *rulers*, as those who *admonish* the brethren and are *over* them in the LORD. Timothy is charged to *rebuke* evil-doers, in order that the rest may fear; Titus is to "rebuke sharply" and with "all authority," and the members of the church are to "obey." Similarly St. Peter, remembering the charge which he had himself received to feed CHRIST'S sheep, compares the officers of the church to *shepherds*, and the members to the *flock*. But if this is so, if the members of the Church of England, or of the parish churches of England, are to obey the ministers in all things indifferent, then what shall we say of the different forms of Dissent in this country? For such Dissent has in every case resulted from disparaging the authority and disobeying the injunctions of the elders of the church. It owes its existence to the belief that the sheep know better than the shepherd. Dissent is nothing else than deserting both the shepherd and the fold. Brownists, Baptists, Quakers, Methodists, each in turn refused to listen to their parish clergy. They said that the rulers of the church should not rule *them*. Very often they pronounced them to be "unconverted men;" they sneered at them as "blind leaders of the blind," and flouted their ministrations as formal;[1] they said

St. Matt. xxiii. 1–3; xviii. 18. St. John xx. 21. Tit. iii. 1; Rom. xiii. 1; 1 Peter ii. 13. 1 Tim. v. 17; Heb. xiii. 7, 17. 1 Thess. v. 12. 1 Tim. v. 20. Chap. ii. 13. Tit. ii. 15. St. John xxi. 15–17. 1 Peter v. 1–5; cf. Acts xx. 28, 29; Eph. iv. 11.

[1] Owen said that our Liturgy was "unsuited to the spiritual relish of the new creature." To which Baxter made answer,

CHAP. XII.

(sometimes perhaps truly) that all they cared for was the fleece and not the flock. In vain the shepherds strove to keep them within the fold; in vain they ventured to "admonish" or "rebuke"; the sheep set them at defiance; they sought fresh fields and pastures new; they appointed some of the sheep to be shepherds.[1] I appeal to Church History to prove that it is thus that Dissent has established its

Page 20.

footing. "The Puritan system," says Skeats, "was one in which the clergy . . . were superiors in rank, as well as work, to the people. The Independents denied the Scripturalness of any such distinction. . . . The sole authority for his office was his spiritual *fitness* and the *consent of the people* to whom he ministered." But what has become of the "ruler," what of the "shepherd"? The shepherd, in this case, holds office at the pleasure of the sheep! Well might Whately say that the Independent system changed "those who are *set over* you in the LORD" into "those who are *put under* you;" well might an aged minister of the denomination remark that he was "not an Independent minister, so much as the minister of an independent congregation." Of the Baptists it is enough to say that their church polity agreed with that of the Brownists,[2] and of the Quaker revolt against all paid ministers—Dissenting as well as Church—it

"Oh, confine not the new creature to those of your opinion!" Elsewhere he observes that "the Pharisees' Liturgy is frequent in separate assemblies: 'God, I thank Thee that I am not as other men.'"

[1] "He is no true minister that derives his authority from them that are not able to give it. But he that derives his authority from the people, derives it from them that have no authority to give it."—Ball, p. 82.

[2] According to the Brownists, a minister was "as a minister of a particular congregation, that if they disliked him or left him, he ceased to be a minister.

is needless to speak. To George Fox the sight of a "priest" was like a red rag to a bull. The earlier Methodists almost invariably justified their separation on the ground that the clergy were *not* to be obeyed; either they were Calvinistic or Arians or dram-drinkers or persecutors.[1] I repeat that Dissent can only exist by ignoring or defying the ministry of CHRIST'S church, and I see in this fact a further proof that Nonconformity is contrary to Christianity—is contrary to the church principles of the Apostles.

[1] The Nonconformist Ball, p. 11, shows that bad men may yet be valid ministers. He instances the sons of Eli, the priests that taught for hire, the scribes and Pharisees, &c. He says, "The Jews were never forbidden to communicate in worship with the bad priests and prophets;" and adds, "If ignorant, scandalous, corrupt men that neither please GOD nor are approved of Him in their office and ministration in a society professing the entire faith of CHRIST, do by authority dispense the ordinances of GOD, the faithful may and ought to communicate with them, if they want power to redress and amend things out of order. They must not communicate *in sin;* but they may and ought to hold communion in the exercises of religion with the true Church of CHRIST." Micah iii. 11.

CHAPTER XIII.

NONCONFORMITY CONTRARY TO THE PRINCIPLES AND PROFESSIONS OF NONCONFORMISTS.

"Let both these truths remain fixed—that he who voluntarily deserts the external communion of a church where the Word of God is preached and His sacraments are administered is without excuse; and that the vices of few or of many are no obstacle to prevent us from professing our faith there, by means of the ceremonies instituted of God."—Calvin, *Instit.* iv. 1, 19.

"But what if sinful terms [of communion] are imposed? No man can make my communion sinful, *i.e.*, make any sin the condition of my mental communion. . . . If they bid me *subscribe* or approve any one falsehood or sin, I will deny it; if they forbid me communion, I will continue it, until they put me away by force. And then it is not I that separate from them, but it is they, by unjust casting me out, that are schismatical."—Baxter, *An Account of the Reasons why the Twelve Arguments, said to be Dr. John Owen's, Change not my Judgment about Communion with Parish Churches*, 1684, *Postscript.*

CHAP. XIII.

WITH the proof offered in the preceding chapter that Nonconformity, as it exists in England, is contrary to the Church principles of the Apostles, the argument here alleged to prove that Dissent is contrary to Christianity is practically complete. I say "argument," but it may be as well to point out that the foregoing chapters contain some seven separate and independent arguments. They are not like the links of a chain; if one position gives way, there are still six left standing. If six were prvoed to be worthless, the seventh might still be impregnable. And until

the seven are met and answered, until the entire evidence laid before the reader is proved to have no bearing on the question, I must regretfully maintain, with all respect for our Nonconforming brethren, and with sincere appreciation of their piety and zeal, that the separation which they or their fathers have made, and in which they sometimes glory, is contrary to the example of CHRIST, contrary to His precepts, contrary to His prayer. I must also maintain that it is condemned by the example of the Apostles, condemned by their exhortations, and condemned by their principles.

But, though the argument from Holy Scripture is now before the reader, yet so sacred and supremely desirable a thing is the reunion of Christians that no stone may be left unturned to accomplish it. I proceed, therefore, in this chapter to show that Nonconformity is contrary to some of the principles and to many of the professions of Nonconformists themselves. And first—

1. *Nonconformists allow that the Church of England is a Church of Christ.* Or, let us say, to meet the views of Independents, they all allow that the parish churches of England are visible churches of CHRIST. They did not always concede this. The first Separatists justified their separation on the ground that our parish churches were not "rightly gathered," that our ministry was unchristian, that our congregations are synagogues of Satan.[1] And this, we readily allow, is a sufficient reason to allege for Dissent; and if the Dissenters of to-day took up this position, we should have no more to say. In that case, the arguments above alleged against secession do not apply. No

[1] This is the ground taken, for example, by Barrowe and Greenwood; by Ainsworth in his *Apology;* by Canne in his *Necessitie of Separation.*

CHAP. XIII.

one can blame a Christian for leaving a company which professes to be a church and is not; *it is his duty to leave it.* However earnest and estimable its members may be, and whatever good they may have accomplished, still it is a duty to separate.

And it is precisely on this ground, let me say here—I shall make many digressions in this chapter, but they will not be found to be unnecessary—that we invite Nonconformists to reconsider their position, and to extinguish their denominations. Not because they are not Christians: they are often most exemplary Christians; not because GOD disowns them; we are sure that He cannot have done so; not because their societies have accomplished no good, for we can see with our eyes, in the changed lives of their members, that they, or rather the Christianity that is in them, has made the world better; but simply because they claim to be churches and are not. We may be mistaken in our views, but these are our views. Holy Writ, the tribunal to which they themselves appeal, seems to us to leave us no option. We cannot recognise "private Christian clubs," to use Dr. Dale's phrase, as "churches" without dividing CHRIST; without acquiescing in divisions in the house and family of GOD; without surrendering the idea of "one body." If there was no church but *the* church in Corinth, at Jerusalem or Syria, we may surely be excused if we hesitate to recognise two or two hundred churches in Leeds, or London, or England.

1 Cor. i. 13.
1 Tim. iii. 15; Eph. ii. 22.
Eph. iv. 4.
Acts ix. 31.

Of course we know it must be a pain to our separated brethren to hear us say this. We can hardly wonder if they resent it, and they do very much resent it. Dr. Conder, for example,[1] uses some strong

[1] *Why are we Dissenters?* pp. 40–44.

words about the 11th canon, which denounces excommunication against all who "affirm or maintain that there are within this realm other meetings, assemblies, or congregations, of the King's born subjects . . . which may rightly challenge to themselves the name of true and lawful churches." And more recently, Mr. Guinness Rogers has complained bitterly that the Lambeth Conference of 1888 studiously abstained from calling the denominations churches. But surely we are not without reason and Scripture in holding that the church—the visible church of any city or country—must be one. It is admitted that we find in the New Testament no trace, however faint, of "polychurchism;" that we turn over its pages in vain to discover a single instance of two separated societies of Christians in one place. If it is not so, let the chapter and verse be cited; we are open to conviction.[1] But if it is so, then what can we do but say with Luther, "Here we stand. We cannot do otherwise, so help us God." To us it seems that the New Testament must be rewritten before we dare to do what they ask of us.

Gladstone, *Church Principles*, p. 112.

And our difficulties are increased when we remember that many of the denominations did not know themselves to be "churches" until quite recently. We only stand where they stood half a century ago. The "Wesleyan Methodist *Society*," the "Methodist New *Connexion*," the "Wesleyan *Association*," have never, unless within the last year

[1] It is admitted, too, that the New Testament recognises "one body" and no more.—Dr. Beet, *Church in the West*, December 1, 1888. It is true that he reminds us elsewhere that the Bible says as little about Diocesan Episcopacy and Infant Baptism, but the two cases are not on all fours. Neither Diocesan Episcopacy nor Infant Baptism contradicts any principle of Christianity, whereas polychurchism does: it flatly contradicts the principle of "one body."

CHAP. XIII.

or two, called themselves churches. Indeed, the conversion of the "Wesleyan Methodist Society" into the "Methodist *Church*" is going on at this moment under our eyes; and the process is a very simple one—Wesley's "private society"—he called it such himself—is becoming Wesley's Church by just assuming the name.[1] Can we be blamed, then, can it be wondered at, if we hesitate to call them "churches" when, had we done it a few years ago, they would have repudiated the name?[2]

But to resume. Dissenters, with hardly an exception, recognise our congregations as churches—most of them allow that the "Established Church" is a church, despite its "establishment." No doubt they think them very imperfect churches; they hold them to be impure; they believe them to be disfigured by grave abuses, but still they *allow them to be churches.* The language recently held by a learned Scottish Presbyterian[3] is, I believe, fairly representative of the opinion of English Nonconformists. "Presbyterians," he said, "hold just as

[1] "In Wesley's original purpose, membership with us was membership in a private society. Now that we are a separately and fully organised church, the whole situation has changed and membership is a different thing. But we cannot expect all our people to realise it all at once."—*Methodist Times*, October 6, 1892. "We have taken to ourselves the name of a church."—The Secretary of the Bradford Conference, 1892. "The transition from the position of a society to the position of a church has been somewhat rapidly made."—Dr. Moulton. "The Wesleyan Conference . . . claimed and exercised the right of appointing the itinerant preachers to administer the sacraments. By so doing, they virtually claimed the status of a church for their societies."—Dr. Rigg, *Times*, September 29, 1892. "The Wesleyans have assumed the position of an independent church."—Dr. Beet, *l.c.*

[2] Wesley, it is well known, expressly forbade his followers to call the societies churches.—*Works*, vi. 358, edition 1810.

[3] Dr. Rainy, *British Weekly*, April 28, 1892.

strongly as Anglicans the unity of the Catholic Church, and, because they do so, they acknowledge the Anglican and other churches to be parts of the true church."[1] I do not know, indeed, that any Dissenters deny to us the status of a church.[2]

And I see in this circumstance—that Dissent has changed its front in this as in some other particulars—one strong reason for not despairing of reunion. For no one, I think, can look back on the long conflict that has been waged, now for three centuries, between Church and Dissent in this country, and still less can he peruse its literature, without being at first impressed with the hopelessness of prolonging the argument. That we still cherish the hope that our separated brethren will ultimately be reunited with us in "one body" is partly due to the fact that Dissent has shifted its ground; that one by one the old positions have been abandoned, and that the religious Dissenter is now nearer to the Church than he has ever been before. It is a matter

[1] What did this learned divine mean, when he went on to say, "The fair question I would put to Anglicans discussing reunion with us is this: I recognise the unity of CHRIST'S Church, do you?" Of course, we recognise that CHRIST'S Church *ought* to be united; that is what we are for ever insisting on, but we cannot pretend that it *is*. If Dr. Rainy thinks it is, perhaps he will explain to us how a united Church is at this moment (*vide Standard* of April 25, 1892) fighting with Snider rifles and Maxim guns in Uganda. "After severe fighting and heavy casualties on both sides, the Protestants succeeded in dispersing the Catholics. Bishop Hirth escaped to Boddov," &c. What he really means to ask us is this: "Do you recognise the unity of CHRIST'S Church, and at the same time recognise all the separate and independent and conflicting communions to be separate churches of CHRIST because they claim to be such?"

[2] At the beginning of the eighteenth century, the old contention that our churches were no churches was already abandoned. In the *Plain Reasons for Dissenting from the Church of England* (London, 1720) the ground taken up is this, "Because we do not look upon it to be *so pure* a church as some others."

CHAP. XIII.

of the first importance that they now acknowledge that the Church of England, despite its past unfaithfulness, and despite its present blemishes and imperfections, has not forfeited the sacred name of Church.

For if it is a church, then it is a church of GOD and His CHRIST. Holy Scripture knows of no church which is not a "church of the living GOD." However corrupt the churches of the Apostolic age were, still they are recognised both by our LORD and the Apostles as His churches. There is no middle course. You cannot allow that the Church of England is a church and yet deny that it is also a church of CHRIST.

Rev. ii., iii.; 1 Cor. i. 2; 2 Cor. i. 1; 1 Thess. i. 1, &c.

But if this is so, if Nonconformists admit that the ancient church of the country is still existent, however modified and reformed, and also admit that it belongs to CHRIST and that He calls it His, then we want to know on what ground they have separated from it. This is the very question which the Presbyterians put to the Brownists: "If they allowed our churches to be true churches, what necessity there was for any separation."[1] It is of no use to say, as they sometimes do, that they have not themselves made any separation; that they have simply remained in the communion in which they were born, and in which their fathers lived and died. In that case, we cannot perhaps accuse them of *creating* a division in the church of the undivided CHRIST—though it is to be remembered that they were admitted by Baptism, as many as have been duly baptized, into *the* church[2]—but we blame them for *maintaining* one.

[1] Stillingfleet, *Unreasonableness of Separation*, p. 62.

[2] This is the view of Nonconformists as well as Churchmen. "By Baptism we are admitted into the church."—Wesley. "Is not Baptism CHRIST'S appointed means of admission into

If it is wrong to make divisions, it cannot be right to perpetuate them, and this they are, however unconsciously, doing. The very names they bear—"Baptist," "Wesleyan," "Independent," and the like, convict them of belonging to a sectarian society—a society which is not *the* Christian society of the country. If it was that, it would need no such epithet to describe it. So that this is the position of the hereditary Dissenter: The hereditary church, the church of the land, exists; he allows it to be a church; it is a part of the church universal into which he was baptized, and he stands aloof from it; he bears a name which, of itself, shows him to be in separation from it. If he has not ruptured the unity of the church, he is helping to maintain a rupture.

And this is the obvious answer to the remark which is sometimes made, that "Presbyterians, Congregationalists, and Wesleyans have as much ground for calling on the Episcopalian to account for and justify his 'separation' from them as he has to require that they should examine whether theirs from him is 'a duty or a sin;'"[1] and to the astonishing suggestion of certain Wesleyans that they being the more in number, Churchmen should be asked to join them. No doubt, if Churchmen have left Congregationalists and Baptists, those communions have a perfect right to ask us why. It is for the separating party to justify its separation. But

His church?"—Baxter. Dr. Owen advocated the "baptizing of the children of church members, giving them thereby an admission into the visible Catholic Church."—*Gospel Church*, p. 50. "By Baptism the Christians at Corinth had been united to the visible fellowship of the Church of CHRIST."—Beet, *Comm. on Ephesians*, p. 387.

[1] Binney, *Lights and Shadows of Church Life in Australia*, p. 145.

CHAP. XIII.

when, pray, did the Church separate from them? Perhaps they will give us a direct answer to this question; perhaps they will name the year. We are quite prepared to say when they withdrew from us, when they declined to worship in our assemblies any longer. But they cannot show that the Church of England has separated from any body, not even from the Pope of Rome. And as to the Wesleyans being more in number—if they are—we answer that if they were ten times as many, still it is they who left us, and not we them. Their own records show when they separated, and now *we* are bidden to come back to them! It is a novel doctrine, too, and, I think, shows the straits to which some separatists are reduced, that church principles should be decided by majorities. You might as well propose to settle our unhappy disputes by wager of battle or by drawing lots.[1] Besides, if *we* are the separatists, if it is our duty to make the reunion, will they tell us which body, which of the two hundred, we are to join? We cannot join them all. If we were content to take Wesley for our Master and Founder, there would still be a hundred "churches" requiring us to go over to them. We ask them, not to join, but to re-join us: not because we are "Episcopalians"—what has Episcopacy to do with the question of severance?—but because they have *separated from the Church*, and that Church CHRIST'S church.

But let us now turn to a second consideration.

2. *Nonconformists allow, for the most part, that they are at one with the Church in the main essentials of religion.* They are fond of saying, and they say truly, that the points in which we are agreed are of

[1] "The longest sword, the strongest lungs, the most voices, are false measures of truth."—*Whichcote.*

primary importance; that the matters which separate us are quite secondary. "We are practically agreed," said Dr. Reynolds, at the Langham Street Conference,[1] "on all the gravest questions of Christian doctrine, of practical morality, of common prayer and praise." It would be easy to multiply such testimonies, but I think a still more convincing proof may be found in the fact that we can use each other's hymns, and even—to a large extent—each other's expositions of doctrine. I imagine that both Dr. Dale's and Dr. Milligan's books, and Dr. Beet's commentaries have almost as many appreciative readers amongst Churchmen as amongst Nonconformists, whilst I have seen Mr. Moule's *Outlines of Christian Doctrine* recommended as a manual for Dissenting Sunday School teachers. Indeed, I do not see how it could well be otherwise, so long as we make our appeal to the same Bible. I am not pretending that there are no differences; what I do assert is that Nonconformists accept the Church's teachings on the *primary* truths of our religion. Even those who write treatises in favour of Dissent, for the most part, "allow the Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion," and appreciate our Liturgy; what they fasten on are—a few expressions here and there or certain features in the Church's polity and discipline. They would confess that *in the main* we are agreed. Then why, we ask again, must they continue in separation from us? If the Church is CHRIST'S church, and "on all the gravest questions of Christian doctrine, of practical morality," &c., teaches what they themselves hold and believe, why must they still account us, as by their action they do, "unmeet for them to join with in Christian

[1] Report, p. 29.

CHAP. XIII.

profession"?[1] If there is *so much* agreement, if our differences are only on secondary points, why must they stand aloof from us? It cannot be because the Church is more or less impure, for

3. *It is a principle with intelligent Nonconformists that every church is more or less impure.* They believe that there may be, and are, churches many, besides *the* church of the place. But they do not believe that any one of these is, or can be, immaculate. They know that every "church" must, in the nature of things, have its blemishes, defects, and abuses. It is only a question of more or less; every church has its share; it *must* have, so long as it is made up of human beings. In this matter, Churchmen and Dissenters are thoroughly agreed. Not only do they maintain that the "churches of Jerusalem, Alexandria, Antioch, and Rome, have erred" (Art. XIX.) both in doctrine and in practice, but they also allow that the various Nonconformist communions are very far gone from original righteousness. I quote one or two Dissenting testimonies which will be amply sufficient for my purpose. "Congregational Churches, it must be owned, have sometimes erred in the opposite extreme. Fencing the threshold of fellowship with inquisitorial stringency

[1] An excellent Wesleyan minister, referring to the refusal of the Bishop of Chester to recognise the denominations as churches, said—in Lord Macaulay's phrase—that a man who like himself had lived amongst those who worshipped cows, thought very little of the differences of Christians. It did not occur to him that if those differences are so very slight, there ought never to have been any separation, and it ought not to be maintained any longer. In like manner Dr. Binney says (p. 86)—"It is to us the source of joy that our Church system does not condemn us to stand apart from all other denominations of Christian men," and this just after he has stoutly insisted on the sacred duty of standing apart from the Church!—See pp. 61–63.

and terrifying formality, they have shown a morbid dread or a criminal negligence of the duty of excommunicating inconsistent members. The results might be anticipated. Pious but sensitive and timid minds looked hopelessly at the grim barrier, whilst the ostentatious and self-confident pushed past them into the Church. Once within the charmed enclosure, it seemed as if none need fear being turned out again."[1] "A much greater evil, however, is to be found in the retaining of persons as church members, when their character plainly unfits them for such a station. Instances have not been wanting in which persons of notorious immorality, such as habitual drunkards and others, have remained in undisturbed possession of their membership; while in other cases there has been manifested a considerable unwillingness to inquire into accusations, to bring faults to light and to act with consistency and decision upon them when proved."[2] "Our character," they proceed to say, "as *professors*, has not been duly distinct from that of the world around us; to say nothing of occasional (but too frequent) instances of immorality; to say nothing even of habitual faults far short of immorality, there is between the world and the Congregational Churches (in common, we admit, but with no pleasure, with the bulk of other communities) far too small a difference of level." I think it needless to multiply such quotations, because they only prove what no thoughtful person denies, viz., that all churches are more or less impure, and must be, so long as their members are men.[3] If, therefore, Nonconformists

[1] Dr. E. R. Conder, *Why are we Dissenters?* p. 20.

[2] *Essays on Church Polity*, ii. 185, quoted in Palmer, *Treatise on the Church*, i. 138.

[3] "It is certified here [St. Matt. xviii. 17–20] that the Church

CHAP. XIII.

must leave the Church, it cannot be because the Church has its blots and blemishes—for every religious body has these; it must be because they are of such a character as to compel a secession. Whether this really is the case, we shall consider later on.

4. Nor can any instructed Dissenter plead in justification of his separation that the Church has in some particulars departed from the Apostolic model, for he himself acknowledges that no church is *altogether conformed to that primitive pattern.* Some of the pillars of Nonconformity have frankly admitted that their own communions differ more or less widely from the church of the first days. "I believed (as a young man)," says Mr. Binney,[1] "that a modern Independent Church was fashioned after the form of the primitive model, and was in exact adjustment, so far as circumstances would permit, with that. A few years served to modify these views. . . . True, the Apostolic churches might be independent of each other, but that did not make each an independent church according to the modern type. The large numbers constituting some, the plurality of presbyter-bishops presiding over all, were against that." "Of the precise organisation of the early churches," writes Dr. Dale,[2] "we know very little. It is not true, indeed, as some one has said, that there is room in that unknown space for every denomination of Christians to consecrate a temple and raise an altar, but it is obvious that if every church must be built on the exact model of the church at Corinth, at Ephesus, or at Antioch, we are in hopeless difficulties. The plans have

cannot be without sin and offence, for it happens that a brother sins and must be admonished."—Stier, *in loc.*

[1] *Lights and Shadows*, p. 119.

[2] *Christ and the Controversies of Christendom.*

been lost and the specifications destroyed." "We claim neither infallibility nor perfection for Congregational Churches," says Dr. Conder. . . . "Defects they have without doubt." "I believe with Dr. Conder," says another Congregationalist,[1] "that a federation of churches was the Apostolic polity, and that it would be perfectly recoverable, if, &c. . . . Such a project is entirely unattainable whilst our people are minded as they are at present." I do not cite these testimonies because I agree with them in every particular; I allege them to prove that if the English Church has, as they affirm, diverged in some respects from the original type, it is not alone in so doing; by the showing of Nonconformists, Nonconformist communions have done the same. It is only a question of degree. Dissenters, therefore, cannot consistently stand apart from the Church, because this or that feature in it appears to them to be unprimitive or defective; for all the denominations, themselves being witnesses, are tarred with the same brush. If they leave the Church because of its errors, it must be because those errors are such as to make it impossible for them to remain.

And this is precisely the reason which intelligent Nonconformists do allege for maintaining their Dissent from the Church. No doubt there are thousands of them who could not tell you why they were Dissenters, precisely as there are thousands of Churchmen who are simply Churchmen by birth or by accident. Thousands of them have no idea that schism is a sin. "They leave a Christian society," says Wesley, "with as much unconcern as they go out of one room into another." But the instructed

[1] Rev. J. R. Bailey, *Leeds Mercury*, April 6, 1892.

CHAP. XIII.

Dissenter cannot act thus. He knows that division amongst Christians must either be an imperative duty or a sin.[1] He would allow with Wesley, "If the Church or Society to which I am now united does not require me to do anything which Scripture forbids, or to omit anything which Scripture enjoins, then it is my indispensable duty to continue therein."[2] He knows that separation needs justification, and when we ask him why he separates he replies that the errors and abuses of the Church are such that he cannot conscientiously remain in her communion.

Yes, this is the answer generally given by intelligent Nonconformists. This is, in brief, the reason alleged by Mr. Binney, Dr. Parker, Dr. Conder, Mr. Horton, and Mr. Edward White. "We unite with you in spirit," says Dr. Bruce, "but, from strong conscientious convictions, we cannot unite with you in the same organisation."[3] But may we ask him and them to be a little more explicit? for conscience is such a variable quantity and an indefinite term. Does he mean that the Church requires or compels, or indeed has any power to compel, her members to believe or to do anything which it would be *sin* in him to believe or to do? Let us suppose that he says "Yes:" I imagine all the divines I have named would say "Yes." Now, it cannot be denied that if this or any church did impose sinful terms of communion it would be lawful and necessary to leave it. Baxter indeed protested that he would not separate under *any* circumstances. "No man," he contended,

[1] "Schism is a great sin. If our opponents can prove our Dissent to be schism, we are bound as Christians to surrender it. . . . Schism is the sin of dividing the Church of CHRIST or of acting so as to conceal, endanger, or disregard its unity."—Conder, p. 34.

[2] *Sermon on Schism*, *Works*, vol. vi. 409.

[3] *Leeds Mercury*, April 6, 1892.

"*can* make my communion sinful, that is to say, make any sin the condition of my mental communion"—which of course is true, and which settles the question of compulsion just referred to. But I think a simpler answer, and the answer to be given to Dr. Parker and the rest, is that no church can possibly impose any such terms. It cannot, because, the moment it did so, it would cease *ipso facto* to be a church; it would become a synagogue of Satan. CHRIST'S church, however defiled by sin, cannot be based and grounded on it; it cannot be be in open league with evil; if it demands anything that is directly against Divine law as a condition of membership, it thereby unchurches itself; it proclaims to the world that it has gone over to the side of the enemy. And this, I venture to think, is the answer to the question whether secession is ever permissible. Secession is allowable where absolutely sinful terms of communion are imposed, but in that case it is not *Christ's church* that you leave, but Satan's seat. Secession *from the church*, CHRIST'S church, is never lawful. How can it be right to depart, whilst He remains? How can it be right to depart, whilst He remains? How can the members be justified in separating from the Head?

Reply to Owen, Postscript.

And this, as I have remarked above, was the ground taken by the early Nonconformists. They protested that "nothing could justify separation from the Church, but such corruptions as overthrew the *being* or *constitution* of it." Even the Brownists, in their *Apology*, said that they never thought it lawful to separate from churches that were true churches. They separated from the English Church, because it was *not a church*.[1]

Pp. 36, 203.

[1] "The Independents . . . denied . . . even the claims of the Establishment to the title of a true Church."—*History of Dissenters*, i. 48.

CHAP. XIII.

But let us return to the apologists of Dissent. They tell us that they cannot join the Church because she would require of them as a condition of communion something that was sinful. But in that case, why do they recognise her as a church? Why does Dr. Bruce "unite with us in spirit" if we are committed and would commit others to sin? He ought in that case to regard us—as I fear some Nonconformists do—with pity or with detestation. And how can Nonconformist deputations approach our Church Congresses with messages of respect and expressions of good-will, if all the time they think in their secret hearts that membership in the Church is based on sin? I submit to Nonconformists that they are on the horns of a dilemma. "If you can unite with us in spirit, then divergent views ought not to keep us apart.[1] If you cannot join with us in 'one body,' then you ought not to give us your respect and sympathy." Or, to put it somewhat differently, "If, as you say, the Church of England is a church, then you ought not to separate from it. But if, on the other hand, as you also say, you must separate, because its fellowship involves sin, then you ought not to call it a church." Perhaps they will kindly tell us which horn they find the more comfortable to rest on.[2]

But *are* the Church's terms of communion sinful? —that is the point to be considered next. Would Dr. Parker or Mr. White have to violate his conscience if he joined our fellowship? I can hardly

[1] See the words of Archbp. Magee, quoted on p. 3.

[2] It is not, I must repeat, to the purpose to ask how, on these principles, the Church of England justifies its separation from Rome, for we never have seceded from the Roman communion; the Romanists, as I have already shown, have withdrawn from us.—See pp. 55–61.

forbear a smile when I remember that one moment we are reproached for making our doors so wide that we admit all sorts of unconverted persons into the Church—the net, that is to say, "gathers of every kind"—and the next moment we are told that the gate is so strait that religious Nonconformists cannot enter it without lacerating their consciences. What then *are* our terms of communion? The Church admits to membership all who, either in their own persons or by their sureties promise and vow three things, namely, to renounce all sin, to believe in GOD, and to keep His commandments. She admits to *full* privileges all who are confirmed—all who will make these same promises, and no other, over again, and who are not too proud or too spiritual to submit to a rite—the laying on of hands—which was used by our LORD and His Apostles, and has been used in the Church ever since. That is all. Now, it may be that these terms of communion are not the best that could be devised. It may be the Church would have done better had she exacted from every candidate for membership, "a profession of having undergone a spiritual change." It may be that no one should be admitted to the Church who cannot "relate the story of his awakening to religious consciousness"—in other words, it might conceivably have been better if the Church had required, instead of a simple profession of Christianity—a declaration of belief in the Triune GOD and a promise to live well—a profession of belief in *ourselves*, in our own religious "experiences" and attainments. But still the question remains: *Are these terms sinful?* Do they require you either to do something which GOD forbids or to abstain from doing something which GOD commands? They do nothing of the kind. No one pretends that it can be "sinful" to promise

CHAP. XIII.

St. Matt. xiii. 47.

Wesley.

CHAP. XIII.

to give up sin, or sinful to vow, by GOD'S help, to keep the commandments! This, then, is all that any man undertakes who joins or rejoins the Church —the profession of the Christian faith, the promise of a Christian life. Neither Mr. Horton nor Mr. White nor Dr. Parker would do more.

But if so (we shall be asked), then what do these gentlemen mean byprotesting that the Church teaches the dreadful doctrine of regeneration in baptism, the doctrine of absolution, and the like? What do they mean by reminding us that the Church exercises little or no discipline, that she is enslaved by her connexion with the State, and so forth, and so forth? Would membership in the Church commit them to the belief in these doctrines and the support of these abuses? To which I answer: Most certainly not. By your membership, you would approve of nothing of which you did not *express* approval. If you desired to be an *officer* of the Church, a minister, you would in that case have to assent to the Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion and to the Book of Common Prayer, &c.; but if you only desire to be a *member*, you assent to nothing except the Apostles' Creed. However erroneous the Church's teachings may be, and however grave her abuses, her lay members are in no wise committed either to the one or to the other.

It is necessary that this should be clearly understood, because Nonconformist writers — perhaps because they are ministers and look at the question from a minister's point of view—constantly give the impression, indeed they sedulously teach that no one can conform to the Church without sanctioning all its errors and abuses, whatever they may be.[1] But a moment's reflection will show you that this cannot

[1] See, for example, the Rev. F. B. Meyer's *Book of Common Prayer, the Ground of Religious Nonconformity.*

be so. For in that case you could join no community under heaven. Each one of these, as we have already seen, has its defects and corruptions. It *must* have them; but do you, by joining it, sanction or approve them? On the contrary, you may loudly bewail them and labour to reform them. And if elsewhere, why not in the Church? "If," as Baxter says, "one may join in communion of worship with a Presbyterian, Independent, or Anabaptist congregation without owning the errors of their communion, then so one may with a parish church." "If I may join," he naïvely replied to Dr. Owen, "with *your own* good prayers and preaching, notwithstanding your many failings, then why not with others?" "There is no man alive," he says elsewhere, that "worshippeth GOD without some sin. But we neither approve of his sins nor his imperfections by joining in his worship." "Approving and consenting are acts of your own mind, and whether you do so or not is best known to yourself. . . . Our *presence* at the prayers of the Church is no profession of consent to all that is faulty in those prayers," because, first, "No man can in reason or justice take that for my *profession* which I never *made* by word or deed. 2. It is another thing which we profess by our Church communion, viz., I profess myself to be only a Christian. 3. The wording of the public prayers is the pastor's work and none of mine. 4. I do not profess an approbation and consent to all the faults in *my own secret* or *family* prayers, much less to another man's, who is not in my power. 5. This opinion would make it unlawful to join with any pastor or church on earth." And to those who objected that it could not be right to join in a service which you knew beforehand to contain errors, he replies, "If I foreknow that there are errors, how does foreknowing them make them

CHAP. XIII.

mine." He points out that GOD foreknows all men's sins, and is present when they are committed, and does not interfere to prevent them, and yet we cannot accuse Him of allowing or approving them.[1] And, in the reply to Owen already referred to, he takes a similar and equally unassailable ground. Owen had argued that "He that joined in the Liturgy made thereby profession that it is wholly acceptable to the mind of God," to which Baxter replies, "This maketh it downright sin to communicate with any church on earth, for all have their faults and errors, even in worship. . . . By this rule you would have separated from every church on earth that we have had notice of for a thousand years . . . and is not that near separating from CHRIST? And when no man knoweth before *you* speak in prayer what you will say, how shall any man that joyneth with you know but he may be guilty of your sin at the next sentence?" He then further asks, "Did CHRIST, by His usual joyning in the synagogue and temple worship, and commanding men to go to the priests, to hear the scribes and Pharisees, &c., profess that He took their worship to be *wholly agreeable to God's will?* Or did the Apostles do so, while they long joyned in the synagogue with the Jews?" And when Owen urged that we could not choose between the good and the bad, Baxter replies that we can: GOD, he says, gives us that power. "I am not bound to own all that any preacher or priest shall say in the Church. GOD put it in the power of the disciples to *beware* of the leaven of the Pharisees and yet to hear them. *Proving* all things is not *approving* all things."

I submit to the reader that this is "sound speech

[1] *Cure of Church Divisions*, pp. 195–8.

that cannot be condemned." But if he is still unconvinced, I will ask him to say plainly, whether, as a Nonconformist, he is committed to every statement hazarded in the prayers of the chapel. He knows that it is not so; he could not enter a chapel if he was to be held responsible for every theological proposition either of the prayer or the sermon. Had I been present in the City Temple when its remarkable pastor spoke (as he is very fond of doing) of a deceased minister as his "*ascended* brother," should I have been thereby committed to this anti-scriptural statement; or am I involved in the common Nonconformist error that the LORD'S day is the Sabbath, if the minister in my presence prays for the "Sabbath School." It is absurd to the last degree. There would be an end to all united worship if it were so. But it is not so. The member of the Church is no more committed, no more "assents" even, as the clergy do, to all the propositions of the Prayer Book, than the member of the Wesleyan Society is committed, as the ministers are, to each and every statement contained in "certain notes on the New Testament, commonly reputed to be the notes of the said John Wesley, and in the first four volumes of sermons commonly reputed to be written and published by him."[1]

St. John iii. 13; Acts ii. 34.

But let me put it in yet another way, for this is a point of cardinal importance. Mr. Binney

[1] This distinction between the subscription and consequent responsibility of *ministers*, and that of mere lay *members*, is constantly overlooked in Nonconformist writings. Yet the two things differ *toto caelo*. "In the judgment of some of the most impartial men of the Dissenters of the present day, although they think the case of the *Ministers* very hard on account of the *subscriptions* and *declarations* required of them, yet they confess very little is to be said on behalf of the people, from whom none of those things is required."—Stillingfleet, *Mischief of Separation*, 1680.

CHAP. XIII.

states that "in spite of the difference in doctrine and ritual between us Congregationalists and the Presbyterians, Methodists, Baptists, and other bodies . . . I have had access to their pulpits,"[1] &c. Was Mr. Binney in any way committed to all these varying creeds and usages? He says not.[2] He tells us that he "differs" from them. But if the man who preaches in their pulpits does not thereby sanction or assent to all their "doctrines and ritual," why does the man who merely sits in the pew? The one is a "master," the other only a learner. The minister may be supposed to have studied these questions, but the same cannot be said of the members. If therefore Mr. Binney—or, let us say, Mr. Spurgeon, for his is a more crucial instance; if Mr. Spurgeon with his pronounced Calvinism could conscientiously *preach* in a Wesleyan chapel, notwithstanding its Arminian Creed,[3] then why may not you conscientiously *worship* in a church. What we want to know, in fact, is this—how the layman can be involved in all the supposed errors of the Prayer Book by merely *attending* church, when no one accuses the preacher of violating his conscience by *ministering* in a chapel of a creed altogether different from his own.

But I must ask one question more—the importance of the subject is my excuse for asking it—and it is

[1] *Lights and Shadows*, p. 131.

[2] "I hold the Bishop of Adelaide to be mistaken in stating that I morally subscribed to the whole of the Wesleyan Creed before I preached in their chapel. . . . I did no such thing." *Ibid.*, p. 59.

[3] And this after Wesley had said that the Calvinist's God was his devil, and, after the conference of 1776, had declared that Calvinism had been the great hindrance to the work of GOD. "Of all his [Wesley's] enemies, his last were his bitterest and worst, Calvinistic Christians."—Tyerman, *Life and Times*, vol. iii. 142.

this: How can the ordinary Church layman, the man who merely goes to church to worship and to hear GOD'S Word, how can he be involved in complicity with all the propositions of the Articles or the Liturgy, when many Nonconformist ministers, by their own showing, decline to consider themselves committed to the express statements of the Trust Deeds under which they preach? I am stating a fact which they will hardly dispute. I appeal to the *West Riding Congregational Review* for 1870, p. 16, which says: "Many of our best and ablest ministers quietly ignore and repudiate the doctrines of their Trust Deeds. If we were to appoint a commission for the enforcement of our Trust Deeds we should empty nearly all the best filled pulpits in the denomination." I appeal to Mr. Baldwin Brown: "Were I preaching under a Trust Deed containing doctrinal statements which I could not find in the Word of GOD, then, instead of lifting up my voice to condemn Churchmen . . . I should be dumb."[1]

It is, therefore, indisputable that, be the errors and abuses of the Church what they may, the lay member of the Church cannot be held responsible for them, especially if, as he is bound to do, he protests against them and labours to amend them. But it may be as well to ask once more whether these errors are so very deadly, and whether these abuses are so gross. I cannot, of course, examine in detail the objections which are entertained and urged by Nonconformists against the doctrine, the ritual, or the discipline of the Church—and that is a work which has been done already[2]—but there are two or three general considerations which I should like to commend to their notice.

[1] *Congregational Year-Book*, 1871, p. 95.
[2] I may refer once more to *Church or Chapel*, parts ii.–iv.

CHAP. XIII.

And first, I most earnestly suggest to them that they only resent many of our teachings because they *entirely misunderstand them*.[1] I know by my own experience that they misunderstand them. There was a time when I urged the very objections which they allege now. I was possessed with the idea that Church teaching was irreconcilable with evangelical truth and was destructive of personal religion. Now I know that it is not so, I can see exactly where I went astray, and this fills me with the hope that Nonconformists, if only they would grant us a hearing, would arrive at the same conclusion. As it is, they go on from year to year denouncing our "sacerdotalism" and "formalism," and never pausing to examine whether *they* do not mean one thing, and *we* quite another.[2]

Secondly, I will ask them to reflect that the old objections of Nonconformity have been gradually and almost entirely abandoned. In other words, Dissenters have discovered that the reasons which their fathers alleged as warrants for secession were many of them no reasons at all. Nonconformity has almost entirely shifted its ground. Let me take one example—*ex uno disce omnes*. There was perhaps nothing in the Church to which the separatists of the seventeenth century more resolutely objected

[1] "Everything that has happened since I came to Grindelwald has confirmed a long-existing conviction that a great many of our unhappy divisions are mainly the result of misunderstanding."—Rev. H. P. Hughes, *Review of the Churches*, vol. ii. p. 372.

[2] "The priestly and sacramental elements which in our view pervade the offices of the English Church, are the principal grounds of our standing apart—grounds which justify *dichostasy* to our conscience and before GOD, and make it a duty and an obligation."—Binney, *Lights and Shadows*, p. 63. And yet good cause can be shown why there is much more reason to fear Sacerdotalism at Chapel than at Church.—See *Church or Chapel?* pp. 324–333, 3rd edition.

than our "stinted forms of prayer." Dr. Owen, for example, argued that to use a liturgy was to take the work of CHRIST out of His hands, and that it prevented all "praying in the Holy Ghost;" and Jude 20. until comparatively recent days all such forms were derided as "crutches." But now many Nonconformists are as much in favour of a liturgical service as are Churchmen.[1] Such a service is constantly advocated at Congregational Union meetings and similar gatherings, whilst Dr. Binney has confessed that the order which the early separatists pronounced "false and idolatrous, polluted with reading stinted prayers and Popish ceremonies" and "taken out of the vile Masse-book" (Canne) is one which he "seldom heard devoutly and appropriately conducted without tears." Not only so, but Dissenters begin to perceive that, do what they will, they cannot get away from forms. "Unless they were to become Quakers," says a late President of the Yorkshire Congregational Union,[2] "a form of some kind they must have, and, as a matter of fact, they had already. The baldest service, if always conducted

[1] Mr. Spurgeon indeed said that he would tolerate but one form of prayer, and that was this, "From all ready-made prayers, Good LORD deliver us." But he was forthwith answered by a Dissenter, who pointed out that in his Sunday School Hymn Book the great preacher had unconsciously sanctioned and adopted a large number of "ready-made prayers."—*British Weekly*, Jan. 17, 1890. "All Nonconformists," says Mr. Edward White, "except Quakers, already use hymns which are *forms of prayer and praise.*"—*Christian World*, July 16, 1890. The argument is put unanswerably in the familiar lines—

> "Crito freely may rehearse
> Forms of prayer and praise in verse;
> Why should Crito then suppose
> Mine are sinful when in prose?
> Must my prayer be thought a crime
> Merely for the want of rhyme?"

[2] *Leeds Mercury*, April 6, 1892.

CHAP. XIII.

on the same lines, was a form of service, and an 'extempore' prayer was a *form* of prayer so far as all were concerned except the man that uttered it." "They had made it a point of honour," he continued, "to be as unlike the Church of England as possible. Whether or not they had kept the commandments on week-days, they had been determined that at any rate they should have no place in their worship on the Sundays. . . . Praise, they had said in effect, could not take the form of a solo; prayer could take no other form." A similar testimony comes to us from across the Atlantic: "That there is anything in the use of a book of prayer unfavourable to spirituality of worship is a mere prejudice growing out of a want of experience,"[1] and the writer adds: "The number of Presbyterian ministers who openly advocate the use of some form of prayer is large, and the number of those who hope and anxiously wait for it much larger." He says that it is by no means uncommon for Presbyterian ministers to use the Episcopal marriage service by preference. Another Presbyterian, Dr. C. W. Shields, writes in a similar strain. "The English Liturgy," he says, "next to the English Bible, is the most wonderful product of the Reformation. . . . There is no other extant formulary which is so well fitted to become the rallying-point and standard of modern Christendom. . . . Were the problem given to frame out of the imperfectly organised and sectarian Christianity of our time a liturgical model for the communion of saints in one universal church, the result might be expressed in some such compilation as the English Book of Common Prayer."[2] Other instances

[1] Professor Hopkins, of Auburn, N.Y., in the *Presbyterian Review*.

[2] *Century Magazine*, November 1885.

of the vast change which has taken place in Nonconformist opinion may be found by such as care to pursue this subject further in *Church or Chapel*, pp. 113–119. To that list the following contribution may be added here: "A remarkable change has taken place among Nonconformists in the matter of *keeping times and seasons*. Most of us can remember when the holding of a Good Friday service would in many chapels have been considered a Popish innovation, and when even Easter and Whitsuntide were allowed to pass unnoticed. Now we have changed all that. . . . One thing is clear: Nonconformists are losing their nervous dread of esteeming one day above another, and are beginning to understand that . . . the celebration of great festivals can never be hurtful and may be a very real source of strength and aid."[1] In fact, if we compare the Nonconformity of to-day with that of the seventeenth century, we are tempted to borrow the words used of an apostle's conversion, to describe the change. Those who reviled the church now preach the faith of which they once made havoc. Gal. i. 24.

But, once more, I will beg Nonconformists to consider that hundreds, I might say thousands, of men certainly not less learned or less honest than themselves, men whom nothing would induce to preach under Trust Deeds to which their consciences were opposed—men like Arnold and Lightfoot and Westcott and Vaughan—having carefully examined the doctrinal positions of the Prayer Book, have found in them nothing contrary to Christianity. I do not

[1] *British Weekly*, March 26, 1891. Yet our observance of Holy Days has constantly been alleged as a reason for Dissent, as, *e.g.*, in the *Plain Reasons for Dissenting from the Church of England* (said to be by Mr. Owen, of Warrington), London, 1720. It is also strongly objected to in *The Old Nonconformist touching the Book of Common Prayer*, London, 1660.

CHAP. XIII.

contend that this proves our doctrines to be right, but I do say that it should suggest to Nonconformists that *they* may be in error. It appeals to them as Cromwell did to the ministers at Edinburgh, "I beseech you in the bowels of CHRIST, think it possible you may be mistaken." I ask them, in the face of this and other considerations, to consider whether there is not a grave probability that their present objections are as unfounded as were those of their fathers, and whether the doctrines and practices which still excite in them so much repugnance may not after all be found to be innocent and evangelical.

But even if Dissenters are immovable on this point, and even if our doctrines are all that they think them to be, still the question remains: Are they such as to warrant a secession? I now submit that *even on Dissenting principles* the secessions of the last three centuries are incapable of justification. For—

5. *It is a principle with instructed Dissenters that nothing short of a denial of the gospel and a general apostasy on the part of the church members can justify a secession.* I should like to cite here Dr. Dods's words, for he belongs to a seceding community, though we may not class him among English Dissenters. "No doctrinal error," he says, "which does not subvert personal faith in CHRIST should be allowed to separate churches."[1] But if his testimony should be challenged, no one will maintain that the *British Weekly* does not fairly represent the views of the most enlightened Nonconformists—it certainly claims to reflect the culture and learning of Dissent. And in an article on Secession[2] it lays down these

[1] On 1 Cor. i. 13, *Expositor's Bible.*
[2] *What justifies Secession?* April 20, 1888.

principles—that "breaking bonds of union is not only a great misery, but a grand sin;" that "the unity of the brethren, so precious to the Head of the Church, must only be broken for the most serious of reasons;" that no reasons short of these will warrant it: "First, when, in the *confessions* of a church, any one of the substantials of the Christian religion is denied; second, when the greatest part of a church makes defection from the truth;" that no church may be divided which does not "evert the fundamentals," or "impose sinful terms of communion;" that when a church justifies evils and errors, and, after all means are used, persists and punishes men for using those means, it *may become at last a duty to secede. But this only after all means have been tried, and after it is clear that the* majority *of the Church have ceased to keep* CHRIST'S *word and have denied His name.*" But if this is so, if these are Dissenting principles, as they are its professions, then Dissent stands condemned on Dissenting principles. For I assume that no intelligent Nonconformist will pretend that the Church of England comes under this category. If he does, then his attitude should be entirely different from what it is; in that case he owes it to us and to CHRIST to denounce the Church in season and out of season. There must be no more professions of admiration and attachment, no more rejoicing in its renewed vitality and efficiency: he should treat us as lepers; we are worse than infidels. Moreover, he is in duty bound, for our sakes and for religion's sake, to tell us plainly in what particulars we have apostatised. Do our standards "evert the fundamentals" of Christianity? If so, where? Do our confessions "deny the substantials of the Christian religion"? If so, which? Do we "impose sinful terms of communion"? If

CHAP. XIII.

we do, what are they? Has the majority of our Church "denied CHRIST'S name"? If it has, then when and how was this fearful crime committed? But no Nonconformist, I venture to say, will answer these questions in the affirmative. Because the moment he does so he finds himself at issue, if not with his own acts and utterances, with those of his co-religionists, for the attitude they assume to the Church and the language they use respecting it, acrimonious as that sometimes is, proves that they do not regard it as *apostate*. The Church, for example, can hardly have "everted the fundamentals" or "denied the substantials," or "ceased to keep CHRIST'S word," if Dr. Reynolds is right in saying that we are "agreed on all the gravest questions of Christian doctrine." Nor can we have "denied CHRIST'S name," because then Nonconformists could not want any interchange of pulpits with us, nor could they regard it as any injury that we hold aloof from them. I earnestly submit, therefore, to our Nonconforming brethren that their Nonconformity is contrary to, and is condemned by, *their own principles and professions*.

CHAPTER XIV.

NONCONFORMITY CONTRARY TO COMMON SENSE.

"None is to separate from a church rightly gathered and established for faults and corruptions which, so long as the church consisteth of mortal men, will fall out and arise among them, even in true constituted churches, but by due order to seek the redress thereof."—Johnson and Ainsworth, Brownist *Confession of Faith*, Art. 36.

"The wise Bishop Gibson once said, 'Why cannot these gentlemen leave the Church? Then they could do no more harm.' Read, '*No more good*,' and it would have been a truth."—Wesley, *Letter to T. Taylor*, February 21, 1786.

IN this last chapter I shall assume that Dissent, instead of being, as I have undertaken to prove, and, as I venture to think, I have proved, contrary to Christianity, is perfectly lawful. I shall assume that any Christian who discovers anything in the doctrine or discipline of the Church, of which his conscience disapproves, or who merely finds that he "gets more good" outside her pale, is free to leave it; free to join any of the existing bodies or to found a fresh one. But I shall endeavour to show that, even if secession is lawful, it is nevertheless by no means expedient; that even if it is a permissible, it is nevertheless a disastrous and suicidal course to take. I shall hope, in brief, to show that Nonconformity, as we know it in England, is contrary to common sense.

CHAP. XIV.

So that if the several arguments of preceding chapters are, as they may be alleged to be, altogether inconclusive; if we are told that Holy Writ sanctions and in certain cases requires secession, still one powerful reason against it remains to me, and that is, that it always does and in the nature of things must do more harm than good; that instead of healing it invariably aggravates the afflictions of the Church; that, in one word, the remedy is always worse than the disease.

But before I enter upon the proof of these propositions, there are one or two arguments pertinaciously advanced in favour of Dissent of which I must briefly dispose. And first: Nothing is more common than to hear men point, and Churchmen quite as often as Dissenters, to the good work done by separatists, by the various bodies of Methodists, for example, or by the Salvation Army, as a conspicuous and convincing proof of the benefits which Dissent has conferred upon our country. It is often said, for instance, that many of our villages would still be steeped in barbarism and irreligion but for the noble work of Nonconformists. Indeed, it is sometimes urged as one of the merits of Dissent, or perhaps I should say of Methodism, that it has roused and quickened the Church itself. But does it never occur to those who take this ground that, whatever the good work done by Dissenters may be —and I for one am not about to depreciate it—they have accomplished that work not *qua* Dissenters but *qua* Christians? Surely it is plain and obvious that separation in itself can have no converting power. It is Christianity has transformed our villages, if they are transformed, not Nonconformity; it is the Gospel of CHRIST and the powers of the world to come, not "the Dissidence of Dissent" or "the

Protestantism of the Protestant religion." And this language about the great achievements of Dissent overlooks a further and equally important consideration, namely, that all this evangelising and Christian work might have been done just as well, *if not better*, without any secession. That such work *can* be done without Dissent is proved by the history of that very Methodism which is so often paraded as a convincing proof of the blessing which Nonconformity has been to England. For it is indisputable that during Wesley's lifetime Methodism remained in close connection with the Church of the country, and it is equally certain that it has never since made anything like the progress that it did then, or been the power for good that it was then. During the last ten years of Wesley's life, when, as is notorious, he was for ever strenuously protesting against separation, the members increased from 52,334 to 134,549. The Methodists have now "assumed the position of an independent church," and, on their own showing, their numbers are almost stationary. At the Bradford Conference of 1892, just after the members of the private society had "taken to themselves the name of a church,"[1] Mr. Percy Bunting said this "church was practically stagnant," whilst the Rev. J. Posnett spoke of its "low spiritual position." It is clear, therefore, that if Methodism has changed the face of our country (as it is often enough said to have done) it is not its Dissent; it is the Christianity which it has retained in spite of its Dissent. Indeed, to ascribe the good work done by separatists to the virtue of their separation would be to dishonour that Eternal Spirit Who alone is "the LORD, and Giver of Life."

CHAP. XIV.

Dr. Beet.

[1] Rev. Dr. Waller, Secretary of the Conference.

CHAP. XIV.

And what, we may be allowed to ask here, is this work which Nonconformists have done which they could not have done had they remained in the Church's fold? Is it open-air preaching, or prayer-meetings, or class-meetings, or temperance, or rescue work? But which of these agencies is forbidden to us? Which of these is not practised in some shape or other by Churchmen at the present day? Even if cornets and trombones are held to be necessary to the propagation of the faith, the loyal Churchman is not denied these luxuries, as the example of the Church Army proves. Whatever, therefore, the good which Dissenters have done or are doing, it might all have been accomplished without any rupture. The *good* might all have been done, and the *harm*, the public scandal, the wretched sectarianism, the untold strife and envying and bitterness, which are the fruits of all division, might have been avoided.

But it is sometimes contended that the very success which has attended the efforts and ministrations of the various Dissenting bodies, proves that their separation has enjoyed the Divine approval. It is suggested that they could never have thriven as they have done, and certainly could never have turned so many from the power of Satan unto GOD, if Nonconformity had not been acceptable to Him. But, allowing all that is said about their success—and that is allowing a great deal—still the question remains, "Was it their *Dissent*, their separation from other Christians, or was it their zeal, their love of souls and their trust in GOD, that achieved these memorable results?" I am sure that the candid Dissenter will say that it was the latter; he will allow that Dissent without holy zeal would have accomplished very little. It

is faith, not the repudiation of other men's faith, not a negation in fact, that "overcometh the world." Besides, if this success is to be ascribed to Protestant Dissent, what shall we say about the success of Churchmen—of the Wesleys, for example—or what shall we say about the undeniable results of Roman Catholic Missions? Conformity and Nonconformity cannot be equally acceptable to GOD, yet Conformists have been no less successful than Nonconformists. Calvinism and Arminianism, again, cannot both be true, yet the rankest Calvinists and the stoutest Arminians have both been owned of GOD. But it is needless to pursue this subject farther, for it is allowed by Dissenters themselves that the apparent success of any denomination is no proof of the soundness of its tenets,[1] and more, that great works have repeatedly been wrought by men who were altogether in the wrong. "It is one of the chief mysteries of GOD'S kingdom," writes a Nonconformist, "that unspiritual men can do spiritual work," whilst Wesley reminds us that "devils were cast out by one who was himself a devil." We cannot admit, therefore, that the success of Dissent, whatever that may have been, is any sort of proof that separation has enjoyed GOD'S blessing. How can division, indeed, save souls?

British Weekly, Feb. 14, 1890.

Works, vol. vii. p. 181.

And now I crave permission (these preliminary difficulties being disposed of), before addressing myself to the proposition with which we started—namely, that Dissent, even if it is lawful, is never expedient—to press two or three questions on the attention of Nonconformists. Will they kindly

[1] "The many complications of the Christian life, make the apparent favour of GOD a very uncertain standard of the truth of the doctrines believed by those on whom He smiles."—Dr. Beet, *Manual of Baptism*, p. 32.

CHAP. XIV.

say, once for all, whether "union is strength" or not? Is it strength in their own denominations? Is rupture, is *dichostasia* the way to advance the efficiency, the growth, the power for good, of any religious communion? If it is not, and they will allow that it is not, then why should it be beneficial to the communion of CHRIST'S church? If it is injurious, if it is simply ruinous to the interests of the (so-called) "sectional church," how can it be for the good of the Church Catholic? And if they profess any uncertainty on this point, then I will further ask them to say whether it is any recommendation to a family—and the church of the living GOD *is* a family (see above, p. 193)—that the members, the brothers and sisters, cannot abide each other's company, cannot endure to dwell under the same roof; I will beg them to consider whether it speaks well for a school—and CHRIST'S church is a school—whether it recommends it to outsiders, that the pupils are constantly deserting it, and setting up rival seminaries, and deputing some of their number to be their teachers; I will ask whether an army —and CHRIST'S church is CHRIST'S army, enlisted to fight His battles—does well, in the stress of conflict, to show a divided front to the enemy. And if they still will have it that secession may be and has been a blessing to the world, then I will ask them to tell us whether it can possibly be a recommendation to a religion which has to teach and convert the world, and that a captious and hostile world, that its professors cannot agree amongst themselves, but speak with discordant voices, each communion insisting that some of the others are in error; I will ask them whether, as a matter of fact, these very divisions have not seriously compromised our religion, and retarded its onward

march, especially in the Mission field. I respectfully suggest to them that these questions are entitled to a patient hearing before we embark on any calculation of the profit and loss of Dissent.

See *Church or Chapel*, pp. 12, 13.

I shall assume, however, that Nonconformists are able to answer them—able to satisfy their own consciences on this score. I therefore proceed to prove that Dissent is no remedy for the errors and abuses which from time to time arise and must arise in the Church; that whatever the good which it may seem to have effected, it has been, and is, the fruitful parent of much greater evils.

Now it will, I think, be admitted that secession from the Church in England has been made for one or other of the following reasons; either

1. Because it was held to be no church of CHRIST at all:
2. Because, though it was allowed to be a church, it was nevertheless believed to be so depraved by doctrinal errors, or defective discipline,[1] or other accretions and abuses, that devout souls

[1] I include under this term that "mixt communion" which gave such great offence to the earlier Dissenters—see *e.g.*, Ball's *Answer to Two Treatises, &c.*, and the *Answer to the Dissenters' Pleas for Separation*, London, 1707. It was forcibly reprobated by Barrowe (who, however, maintained that the "parish assemblies, as they stand generally in England, are not the true established churches of Christ") in his trial before the High Commissioners. Mr. Gladstone observes (*Church Principles*, p. 114), "It is clear . . . that the composition of the church must ever be not only mixed, but so mixed that she does not even contemplate effecting on earth anything like that final separation which must one day be made." See Dr. Dale, quoted p. 149. As to the enforcement of discipline, as Baxter observes, "It is far easier to separate or complain for want of discipline than to find out a due way to restore it." He further shows the almost insuperable difficulties which stand in the way. "It exasperates those who most need it, and benefits those who need it least."—*Of Confirmation*, p. 174.

CHAP. XIV.

must needs come out of it, must separate, lest they should be partakers of its sins, and should lose their own souls.

3. Because men thought they could do the work of GOD more effectively in a separated communion, or

4. Because they found the services and sermons of some Nonconformist body more edifying and profitable than those of the Church.

These are, as history shows, the reasons which, though not always urged in these very words, have been alleged in justification of the secessions of the last three centuries. Let us now see whether these same reasons are valid.

As to the first, a few words will suffice. If the Church of England is no church, then it is not merely lawful to leave it; it is a sacred duty so to do. For if it is no church, it is an imposture and a usurper. If it is no church, then it can never do the church's work; can never be an ark of safety; never be a treasury of grace; never be the school of souls; in short, it can never advance CHRIST'S religion; it can only injure it. The Christian must have no part in a communion which says it is CHRIST'S church and is not. He owes it to the church's Head and to his own soul to repudiate it altogether. On this point we are agreed.

See above, p. 203.

But where, let me ask, are the intelligent Nonconformists of the present century, who affirm that the Church of England is no church? There are no such men; such Dissenters are an extinct species. Whatever charges the leaders of Nonconformity now bring against the Church, you search their writings in vain for any distinct assertion that it is not a church; that its corruptions are of such a character as to overthrow its very being and

constitution. I may pass on, therefore, to the second reason assigned for secession, namely, that the errors and defects of this church are such as to compel men, in loyalty to CHRIST, or out of regard for their own safety, to come out of it.

Now, I will not ask what these soul-destroying errors are, though I know perfectly well what answer, in the vast majority of cases, I should receive. I should be pointed, of course, to the Church's doctrine of Baptismal Regeneration,[1] and I should be told how she is steeped to the ears in Sacerdotalism.[2] Well, I do not pause to consider whether this teaching is right or wrong:[3] I have discussed these questions elsewhere. I shall here assume that these doctrines are distinctly unscriptural; that they are fraught with danger, and more, that they are not the only

Church or Chapel, chaps. xxvii.–xxix. and xlix.

[1] "We can consent to no union which would express connivance with the soul-destroying error on the subject of Baptism, which is the first lesson of the Catechism."—*The Freeman* (Baptist). "No peace with Rome, no terms of union even with Canterbury, though we love it a great deal better than Rome, so long as Canterbury imposes in the worst form what we believe to be the sacramental error taught in the occasional services of the Prayer Book. All other difficulties are trivial in comparison with this."—Rev. Edw. White, *Presidential Address to the Congregational Union*, 1886.

[2] "The 'Creed' and 'Orders' of the Anglican Church include in them together a sacramental and sacerdotal element at variance with the teaching of Scripture."—Binney, *Lights and Shadows*, p. 61.

[3] I should like to point out that whether it is right or wrong, Baptismal Regeneration, rightly understood, is a doctrine to which some eminent Nonconformists are gradually but closely approximating. It is well known that Dr. Dale has entirely repudiated the Zwinglian view of the sacraments, whilst Dr. Beet, in his *Treatise on Baptism*, distinctly holds Regeneration in and through Baptism in the case of the believing *adult;* he only denies the gift of regeneration to those "little children" of whom our Saviour said, "Of such is the kingdom of heaven"—and he denies it to them on the unevangelical ground that they can do nothing to merit or promote it.

CHAP. XIV.

soul-destroying errors held and promulgated by the Church. And admitting all this, for the sake of argument, I proceed to say that these errors are so many reasons for remaining in the Church; I say that the way to combat and overthrow them is not to go, but to stay.

For this is how matters stand: A church of CHRIST, a communion which He recognises as His, is *ex hypothesi* holding and teaching dangerous and pernicious error. The question is: What is the *wisest* course (we are now concerned exclusively with the wisdom and the gain, or the unwisdom and inexpediency of secession) for the Christian to take to remedy or abate this terrible mischief?

It may be said of course, probably it will be said, that the *expediency* of remaining is not all that we have to think of; it may be said that to remain would be sinful; that it would involve complicity in error and make a man partaker of the church's sin. But the answer to this is that the man who remains *and protests*, and indeed remains for the purpose of protesting, cannot be held accountable for any of the errors against which he protests. Whatever evil the church may teach or may do, his public and sorrowful disclaimer of any agreement therewith, his distinct and outspoken declaration of opposition thereto, frees him from all responsibility. Merely to remain might import, or be understood to import, acquiescence in errors and abuses, but no one can pretend that the man who protests against such things can all the while acquiesce in them.

So that, I repeat, the question we have to decide is this: Which is the wiser course to take; which is for the advancement of the kingdom of peace and truth and righteousness—to protest against errors in the church and to remain, or to protest and

secede? I say distinctly that the former is wise and the latter unwise; that the former may bring about immediate reform, whilst the latter cannot; in one word, that secession, so far from purifying the church, simply leaves it to its fate—leaves it perchance to go from bad to worse.

And this I now engage to prove.

But first I must be permitted to observe that this policy of separation from a community because of its supposed corrupt state has been tried in one way or another again and again. It always will be tried because it is the easy (I had almost written cowardly) thing to do. Anybody can secede, but to remain and labour for reform requires courage and patience and self-denial. I say that secession has been resorted to repeatedly, and always with disastrous effects to the society. The anchorites of the early Christian centuries withdrew into the desert because the world was so wicked; with the result that, the salt which would have purified it being removed, the mass was left to putrefaction. The religious of a later day withdrew into their cloistered cell—again because of the prevailing impiety—with this result, that the wickedness waxed worse and worse. And a similar policy is pursued by many in our own time—by all those, for example, who take themselves out of society, or who abjure politics and the play and even commerce, because of their abuses. They are responsible, each in his degree, for the deterioration which inevitably ensues. They were meant to be the leaven which should permeate and purify these things, but they prefer the much simpler course of leaving them to fester and rot. I say we have seen this same policy of separation pursued again and again, and always with the same results, and that a review of these results should make us hesitate

CHAP. XIV.

before we take a similar course with regard to the Church of GOD.

But we do not need to appeal to the effects of secession on the world; we can see for ourselves what are and must be its effects on the Society of CHRIST. Here are men, members of the church, who are more enlightened or more sanctified than others. They mourn over the ignorance or irreligion of others; they can see, as others cannot, how very different the Church of the living GOD ought to be. Now, so long as they are content to remain in the church, they can influence it and help to reform it; they have a *locus standi;* they have a right to be heard; they are members of the community, with members' rights and privileges. They have simply to convert the majority to their views, and reform is assured. But the moment they leave the Church, their influence therein is at an end; they will be listened to no longer. Now they are outsiders, without any stake in the concern; nay, their very secession is an affront to the rest, and an affront which creates a gulf between them and the rest. They have taken up a position of antagonism; who will pay any heed to what *they* may say or do? So far from heeding them, such is human nature (and human nature remains even in the regenerate), that men cling all the more obstinately and tenaciously to their errors, just because these separatists provoke them so to do. They cannot afford (so they argue) to make these concessions or those reforms; the separatists, the men who have pronounced them unfit to worship with, would say that *they* had extorted them. So they set themselves to find excuses for them; they resolve, even though half ashamed of them and not half indisposed to reform them, to stick to them. All that the secession has done, consequently, is to

destroy the influence and shut the mouths of the Dissenters; all that it has done is to "vex certain of the Church," and to harden and embitter them.

And here I am happy to be able to cite the testimony of a typical Dissenter in support of this view. "I do not believe," said Mr. Binney,[1] "that much will ever be done in the way of liturgical reform in the Church by the fault-finding of those that are without: that only provokes resistance to aggression." Exactly so; this is precisely what I am trying to establish. And this language concedes the very point in debate. Those who withdraw can do nothing to promote reforms. Their withdrawal gives to their representations the aspect of impertinences or aggressions.

And if it is alleged, as it may be, that secession has, as a matter of fact, accelerated reform; if we are told that the Roman Church, for example, has purged herself of many abuses since foreign reformers deserted her, or that the English Church has been put upon her mettle by the dissidence of Dissent,[2] we will not argue (though we may think it a case of *post quod* and not *propter quod*) whether this is really the case or not: it is enough for us to reply that the same reforms might have been accomplished, and more radically and speedily accomplished, had the separatists remained. In the nature of things, it can never conduce to reformation to begin by making a breach, by branding

[1] *Lights and Shadows*, p. 136.

[2] M. Edmond Scherer, in the *Revue des deux Mondes* (May 15, 1861), writes with perfect truth, "Le Methodisme a plus fait que d'établir une secte; il a vivifié toutes les autres; il a étendu son influence jusqu'à l'Eglise établie; il a remis en honneur les doctrines de la Reformation; il en a reveillé le clergé; il lui a communiqué l'esprit missionaire." But which of these results is due to its forming a sect?"

CHAP. XIV.

others as unclean. That breach—for a time at least—bars the way to all regeneration.

But suppose we admit, for the sake of argument, that Dissent has helped to remedy the "errors" of the English Church—though our Prayer Book remains much what it was: there are those who say that it and the Church which uses it have become more and more priestly and sacramental—still, we are bound to remind them that such remedy has been purchased at a ruinous price, at the price of dismembering and so weakening the body of CHRIST. You tell us that one result of separation has been the marvellous revival which has been witnessed of late years in the National Church. Be it so. (We say indeed that separation has had nothing to do with this revival, but let that pass.) But even then, the cure has been worse than the complaint. Certain grave abuses have been purged away, but the church, CHRIST'S army, His instrument for the regeneration of humanity, has been desolated and afflicted; has been reduced to comparative impotence. Its voice has been well-nigh silenced;[1] its witness has been impaired; its force has been frittered away; it has become a scorn and derision to its enemies. So that to make divisions in order to promote reforms is to rob Peter to pay Paul; it is to leap out of the frying-pan into the fire. Irenæus warned the sectaries of his time that "no reformation which they could effect could possibly compensate for the injury wrought by the schism." And if Nonconformists discount his words—and they often talk as if the "pure gospel" and right ideas of religion were quite unknown to the Fathers—unknown indeed before the age of Wesley and Whitfield—

[1] "The divisions of Christendom have silenced the voice of the Church."—*Dean Jellett.*

then I commend to their notice the following words of one of the moderns in whom they have unbounded confidence :—

"When we have found," says Mr. Gladstone, "the Church of Divine institution, we may see in it many things not accordant with our wishes. . . . There are two courses we may follow as shall appear right. One is to endeavour so to adjust our feelings as that they shall approve; the other is to endeavour . . . to rectify what we find reason to believe wrong, but *on no account to adopt that remedy which must be worse than the disease,* the abandonment of the body of the Church itself." [1]

Church Principles, p. 308.

And there is another fruit of secession which must be hinted at here, and that is—its effect on the seceders themselves. We have seen that it delays reforms; that it hardens and exasperates those who remain; that it puts the church to open shame. But this is not all that Dissent has done; it has exercised a baleful influence on the seceders themselves. I am unwilling to say much upon this subject, because it must be distasteful to Dissenters, but I cannot help remarking that the effect of secession on the character has constantly, unless I greatly deceive myself, been such as the Christian can only view with profound concern. I will not point to prominent seceders—though I think I might call them in evidence, from Robert Browne down to the Wesleyan Reformers—nor will I instance the interminable wranglings [2] which separa-

[1] "The physician"—I believe they are St. Bernard's words, but I cannot verify them—"should attack the *disease* and not the *patient.*"

[2] Skeats, *History of the Free Churches*, p. 40 (Ed. 1869), says: "When Smyth joined the Church at Amsterdam it was already torn with dissensions, and the course which he took added to its divided state. . . . The Independents in their turn denounced

CHAP. XIV.

tion seems always to bring in its train, but I think it right to ask whether secession is not at this moment producing all over England a crop of pride and self-complacency, and bitterness and hatred. I freely grant that odious characteristics are not to be traced amongst Dissenters only—our divisions have engendered no few fierce animosities and jealousies in the bosoms of Churchmen—but I do assert that whatever Nonconformists may have gained by their separation, it has not always or often been a respect for constituted authority and that spirit of self-abnegation, that humility and docility, that consideration for others, and that fervent charity which are the spot and seal of CHRIST'S disciples.[1]

But let us now turn to a third reason assigned for Dissent. Men have left the Church in considerable numbers—perhaps more for this reason than for any other—on the ground that they could serve God more effectually, that they could do Christ's work more freely by joining or forming a new denomination. The Church has seemed to them to be inert and icebound; to be deficient in missionary zeal; to care but little for the souls of men: they have straightway concluded that they must seek

Smyth and his party as heretics, and excommunicated them." And again, pp. 42–3, "The most conspicuous fault of the Separatists was excessive dogmatism. It was impossible for them to err; impossible for any who differed from them to hold the truth. They were all infallible in their judgments, and none knew the whole truth of GOD but they." The five or six Independents who were nominated to the Westminster Assembly were as intolerant as the rest (p. 52).

[1] Wesley, in his *Reasons against a Separation from the Church* (vol. xiii., 193–9), writes: "If upon any provocation or consideration whatsoever they separated and founded distinct parties, they grew less and less useful to others, and generally lost the spirit of religion in the spirit of controversy;" and then adds, "We have melancholy instances of this, even before our eyes."

a field for their energies elsewhere. But I suggest to them that their secession, whatever freedom of action it might seem to ensure them, has really been a grave hindrance to the kingdom of our CHRIST.

Now, I will not ask again, obvious as the question is at this moment, whether "union is strength" or not; I will not ask what particular form of work it is that Christians can do outside the pale of the Church which they cannot do in it, nor will I do more than suggest that if these earnest persons had remained amongst us they might possibly have stimulated Churchmen by their bright example, whereas by their secession that example is to a large extent withdrawn from our gaze; let me freely admit, for the sake of argument, that they themselves —the Methodists, for example—have been enabled to do a work for GOD, which they never could have done without separating. Still, I must maintain that such separation has not been for the true interests of religion; has not been in the long run (whatever its present or its apparent gains) for the greater glory of GOD or the greater good of man. I say that the freedom of the individual has meant the injury of the community, and that his success has been purchased at a heavy price; at the price of the discipline and cohesion, the strength and efficiency, of the army of GOD. No doubt the free lance, the guerilla, can do things, and sometimes can achieve results which the disciplined soldier cannot do, but whether his irregular warfare best serves his country is a very different question; and especially is this the case if as often as not he turns his weapons against his own countrymen. But in any case, and however unexpected and astonishing his exploits, the veteran in the ranks

CHAP. XIV.

can only shake his head and cry, "C'est magnifique, mais ce n'est pas la guerre." I submit that it is precisely the same in the long warfare of the Church. "Order is heaven's first law," and not even Church order can be set at defiance without injury all round.

See p. 161, above.

Let us take the case of the Methodists—*instar omnium*—and the more so as "the necessities of the work of GOD" is the plea they often urge in justification of their separation. They have built up a powerful society, it is true, with branches in almost all lands, but they have struck a blow at the same time at all discipline. They seceded, let us allow, from the purest of motives, but they have thereby taught others to secede—to depart from *them*—for all manner of reasons or for no reason at all. They have preached the gospel and even preached Christian perfection, but they have at the same time taught the enemies of religion to blaspheme, for to them it is mainly due that our Christianity is so steeped in sectarianism and so disfigured by jealousies. They have gathered men to CHRIST out of the highways and hedges, but at the same time they have furnished a powerful weapon to the community which they regard with so much distrust and abhorrence, the united Church of Rome.[1] They have done great things in the way of Foreign Missions, but they are largely responsible for those rival and conflicting organisations, which are the despair of the missionary, which bewilder the heathen, and lead them to turn away from our religion in

[1] Nothing that I know of in the world doth so strongly tempt some sober, conscientious men to think Popery necessary for the concord of churches as the woeful experience of the errors and schisms, the mad and manifold sects, that arise among those that are most against them."—Baxter, *Last Answer to Bagshaw.*

disgust. They have left their mark upon England, but they have meanwhile so divided and therefore weakened its Christianity, that the State treats religion, treats the demands and teachings of the Church, with ill-concealed contempt.[1] In one word, the good they have done—and that has not been inconsiderable—is, to my thinking, far outweighed by the injury and loss which have resulted from the schism. And I must again remind the reader that though I have allowed, for the purpose of the argument, that this good could not have been accomplished without secession, it is an entirely gratuitous concession. The truth lies just the other way. All the good might have been done just the same, and all the injury and misery might have been avoided.

I come to the last reason alleged for separation—the ground of private edification. It is needless to say that thousands of Englishmen will tell you that they go to chapel because they get more good there; because either service or sermon, or both combined, conduce more to their personal profit. Now, there are several considerations which I might urge *in limine* here. I might remind those who take this ground that no such plea was allowed by the first

[1] "I strongly believe that our present differences are an unspeakable curse, and that they greatly hinder our influence. I believe the truth of the remark which a policeman made to Charles Garrett: 'If you Christians would only agree, you could secure Sunday-closing next week;' and that there is no conceivable reform that the Christian conscience demands, which would not be conceded by any government in Westminster, if we were but united in our demand. The truth is that the Christians of England, though perhaps a minority, are still so powerful a minority, that they hold England in the hollow of their hands; and if we ceased to quarrel with ourselves and unanimously quarrelled with the devil, we could control the British Empire. If united, I believe we could make war absolutely impossible."—Mr. H. P. Hughes, *Review of the Churches*, vol. ii. p. 373.

CHAP. XIV.

Dissenters;[1] I might insist that we are not always the best judges of what is really and truly for our edification; that we are prone to think that what we like is what we need, and that our idea of private edification not unfrequently is listening to sermons which agree with our private opinions; I might submit that respect for authority and obedience to those who are "set over us in the LORD" may be even more salutary for the soul, because involving more self-discipline and chastening, than the most eloquent of prayers or the most ingenious of discourses. But I prefer to take other ground. I say that the Christian has something else to think of besides his personal profit. He is a member of a community: he has to think of its interests and advancement. *Salus populi suprema lex.* He has to "seek first the kingdom of heaven." He has to love the church, even as our LORD loved it and gave Himself for it.[2] He may not put even his own profit, much less his supposed profit, before the welfare of the Body and Bride of our LORD. If it is gain to him to make or to perpetuate a division, it must be loss to the community which he thus helps to divide. Such divisions have been described by a recent Congregational Union as "distracting and dividing our British Christianity," and, more forcibly, by a leading Nonconformist as an "unspeakable curse;" he must be

At Hull, in Oct. 1889.

See note, p. 251.

[1] The pretence of greater edification, says Stillingfleet, p. 76, in separate meetings, was never allowed by the separatists or Independents as a reason for separation. "The ground of separation with them was the want of a rightly constituted church: other defects were never thought to be valid grounds of separation."

[2] "The Scriptures hold out to our view the actual historical Church as the great object of the love and regard of Christ." —Gladstone, *Church Principles*, p. 118, who quotes St. Augustine, "Credamus, fratres, quantum quisque amat ecclesiam Christi, tantum habet Spiritum Sanctum."—*Exp. in Evan. Joan.*, Tr. xxxii.

no party to bringing or binding that curse on the covenant people of GOD. In the church where GOD has placed him there he must abide—just because it is GOD'S church—whatever the services, whatever the sermons. His comfort must be that "the unworthiness of the ministers hinders not the effect of the sacraments;" his assurance, that GOD will never let him suffer for his patient continuance in the path of duty, and his conclusion, that what *seems* to be for his edification cannot be for his real advantage. What is bad for the Church can never be good for any member thereof.

I submit these considerations to the candid reader as effectually disposing of the reasons commonly advanced in favour of Dissent. I contend that they furnish proof that Dissent is no more expedient than it is lawful; that it is as contrary to common sense as it is to Christianity.

But I cannot conclude this chapter without invoking the testimony of an able and devoted Presbyterian, Dr. Paton, the well-known missionary to the New Hebrides, in support of my contentions. I am well aware—this is one result of our divisions—that any arguments which I may allege will be regarded with suspicion. To many minds, it will be enough that I am a Churchman, and also a convert to the Church. May I hope that they will listen more favourably to one of themselves when he pleads for "Church Union." For such a plea, and a plea urged with touching simplicity and grace, appeared from Dr. Paton's pen in the *British Weekly* of March 3, 1892.[1] After remarking that "the first pious Australian colonists . . . made the sad mistake of introducing into this new Australian land not only all the religious denominations but all the sections

[1] "A Plea from the South Seas for Church Union."

CHAP. XIV.

and shades of thought in each," he goes on to say that they soon had "congregations representing every shade of difference, all contending for existence, numbers, and power, and so weakening the spiritual influence of the church on the masses." He then informs us that "after each party had independently struggled on for years, trying to establish and extend its own branch, the wise fathers of the thereby weakened church saw that such contending divisions were suicidal to the Christian church's real work and best interests in the colony. They saw that these divisions . . . . were wasting precious time, energies, money, and opportunities for good, and merely losing influence by their jealous contendings, as each party tried to outdo the others in gaining numbers and power in Church and State affairs." The leading Presbyterians, he says, "mourned over the paralysing influence of these divisions," and with a view to remedy them, formed an Incorporated Union and joined forces as The Presbyterian Church of Victoria. He then tells us of the singular blessing which has rested on this and similar reunions in the other Australian colonies. "There is no rivalry, jealousy, or wasted power now in the Home and Foreign Mission work." "In her divided capacity she could not have done a tithe of what she has done and is now doing, nor could she have exercised discipline over her ministers and members, as she has done to maintain the purity of her worship and doctrines." He then proceeds to ask whether, in view of "these grand results in her greater power for good," "the leaders of each section in our British churches . . . cannot for GOD'S glory in the common good sink their differences" and constitute a similar union at home. "What a saving," he says, "it would be if the small sections" of the Presbyterian

churches in many parishes of Scotland, "who are struggling to exist and outdo each other, and are ready to magnify and fret over every little annoyance, supposed or real, causing strife, and driving their people farther apart from each other, could be so united for the sake of both the church and the world."

I venture to hope that this pleading voice, in which I seem to recognise the very accents of our LORD on the night of His betrayal, will not have spoken in vain. It is needless to say that the writer of these words is not in agreement with me in every particular. He advocates an "Incorporated Union;" I believe that in the historic church our LORD Himself has provided us with such a Union. Dr. Paton, again, believes in polychurchism; I do not. But these divergences of opinion, so far from weakening his testimony as to the evils of division, lend it all the greater force. Because he holds Nonconformity to be lawful, his witness against its folly, against its "paralysing influence," against its "rivalry, jealousy, and wasted power," is all the more valuable for my purpose. Nor is he by any means alone in the estimate of division and the consequences of division here formed. Those Nonconformists are neither few nor insignificant who have spoken to the same effect. I claim them all as fellow-workers in the same blessed cause, the cause of Christian reunion. I claim them as so many advocates of the view expounded in this last chapter, viz., that Nonconformity is contrary to common sense.

And with this chapter my seemingly ungracious but really charitable and necessary task reaches its close. I say it was both charitable and necessary for some one to urge these views, because we owe

CHAP. XIV.

it to CHRIST the Church's Head, we owe it to the souls for whom He died, to protest against the multitudinous divisions which rend His body in pieces and bring His spotless name into contempt. It was necessary that some one should compare Nonconformity with Christianity, whatever the odium he may incur by so doing, when, during the past year, a colossal "Church" has been constituted by the simple process of "assuming the name." The arguments advanced in these chapters cannot, I know, be regarded as complimentary to Dissenters, but they have been almost wrung from me by the daily contemplation of the jealousy and rancour, the strife and havoc, which are the results of the unchristian policy of secession. I leave them to the candid and patient consideration of Christians. I entreat those who do me the honour to read what I have written to weigh it in the balances of the Divine Word. If I have misstated anything, if either my premises or my conclusions are faulty, they will do me and the truth a service by fastening upon it and exposing it. They may rest assured that all honest and legitimate criticism will receive my grateful attention. Only I will beg of them not to concentrate their forces on mere details, and not to try to dispose of my arguments by a side wind. I respectfully submit that the gravity of the subject and the character of the arguments alike demand that such an indictment should be met directly and argued on broad principles. We are not contending for victory, but for truth. It is in the earnest hope that these pages may make for truth and charity and unity that I send them forth to the world. "Go, little book, GOD give thee good passage."

APPENDIX ON POLYCHURCHISM.

In the *Times* of Sept. 17, 1892, *àpropos* of the Grindelwald Conference (which came to a close on that day), I was permitted to raise the question of *Polychurchism*, by suggesting to those who had advocated the "Reunion of *the Churches*" these three inquiries :—

"1. What reason, what shadow of reason, have we for thinking that there are or can be two, much less two hundred churches of Christ, holding different doctrines, with varying names, orders, &c., in one city or country?

"2. When and by what means did the Wesleyan Methodist Society . . . become the Wesleyan Methodist Church?

"3. Where do we find that the remedy for errors and abuses in the Church is secession?"

This was the beginning of a correspondence which was continued in the *Times* of Sept. 19, 20, 26, and 29; was then transferred to the columns of the *Methodist Recorder* (Oct. 20, 27, Nov. 3, and Nov. 10), and was concluded in the pages of the *Church in the West* (Nov. 19, Dec. 3, 10, 17, and 24).

I had hoped, I may be allowed to say, that those who *assume*, as the very basis of a conference on reunion, that there are many "churches," and that one "church" is as good as another, would have been prepared to allege some warrants of Holy Writ, the only court of appeal which most of them recognise, in support of their theory. But from the beginning of the controversy to the end, not one solitary Scripture was cited, as the reader will see for himself. The one aim which my critics kept steadily in view was this—to put me in a corner by

requiring me to say which of the conflicting communions in other countries was *the* church of that country.

I cannot but regard this fact as striking and significant. I must also add that the silence that is preserved on this subject, the absence of all reference to the Scriptures, has struck others as well as myself. "We looked in vain," says the *Christian Commonwealth*, an undenominational journal, "through the proceedings [of the Grindelwald Conference] for any definite appeal to the Word of God, by which the differences must eventually be destroyed, if they are ever destroyed at all."

However, both Dr. Rigg and Dr. Beet, whilst shirking, or at least shelving the plain and definite issues which I had raised, insisted that I should say "which was the one legitimate church in Germany or Switzerland," and inquired what I thought "about those Anglicans who fraternise with the Old Catholics," &c.

For some time I strove, as the correspondence of Sept. 26–Oct. 27 shows, but strove in vain, to secure anything like a consideration of my questions. I reminded Dr. Beet (Dr. Rigg soon retired from the fray, answered out of Dr. Beet's own mouth) that these questions were first in the field, and therefore were entitled to be considered first. But he was urgent for a reply, and his fautors cried out delightedly that he had "gripped me with a pair of forceps." The result was that my reasonable and fundamental questions were thrust on one side, as I had foreseen that they would be, and on Nov. 3, I answered Dr. Beet's inquiry in the following words :—

"I am required to say which is the legitimate church in Germany. I confess I am surprised at the question, especially as coming from Dr. Beet. No single communion in Germany, or, so far as I know, in any country, can claim to represent the whole church of that country. The only strictly legitimate church in Germany would be one which exhibited—I use Dr. Beet's own words—'the oneness of the visible community of the baptized.' But this visible community in Germany as elsewhere has

been shattered; partly by the preposterous claims of the Roman pontiff, partly by the impatience or wilfulness of would-be reformers. The members of these communities are, whatever they may call themselves, by virtue of CHRIST'S own sacrament of Baptism, members of the universal church. The ministers of these communions are, if they have been lawfully appointed, ministers of the universal church (every bishop, priest and deacon—*vide* 'the Ordering of Priests'—is appointed a minister 'in the *Church of* GOD,' not in this or that particular church). But those communions, though possibly parts of the church, even if corrupt parts—and every church is more or less corrupt—are not in GOD'S sight separate churches. CHRIST is the 'Head of the Church,' 'of the body;' not of the 'churches' or 'bodies.' The Roman communion in Germany is a part of the church; its members have been baptized, its ministers have been lawfully called and sent. The Old Catholics are a part of the church; its members have been baptized, its ministers have been duly commissioned. The baptized members of the Lutheran body are members of the church—as to its ministers I say nothing one way or the other. But no one of these communities is *the* Church of CHRIST in Germany."

Dr. Beet's reply, which he humorously entitled "The Canon's Dilemma," was published in the *Methodist Recorder* of Nov. 10. He says *inter alia*—"Canon Hammond admits that the Roman Communion in Germany and the Old Catholics are each a part of the church. But these are independent and organised communities with different names and holding different doctrines, and in much more severe antagonism than are Anglicans and Nonconformists in England. . . . The Canon admits that the Roman Communion is part of the Church of CHRIST, and yet thinks that the Old Catholics have done well to leave it and set up a rival communion with all church ordinances. . . . The real question which Canon Hammond raises is whether there are or

ever have been or can be, circumstances which justify Christians setting up another church organisation distinct from and independent of that to which they formerly belonged. His whole argument is a negative answer to this question. His sanction of the Old Catholic secession is an affirmative answer. Unless he can explain and remove this objection, it will make his argument a *reductio ad absurdum*."

To this the following answer appeared on Nov. 19:—

"Dr. Beet insists that the Old Catholics have seceded from the Roman Catholic body in Germany; he observes that I recognise them as a part of the Church; he therefore concludes that I allow secession and polychurchism in Germany and only object to it in England. This is the 'dilemma' in which I am supposed to be. We shall now see whether these things are so.

"And first, I want to ask Dr. Beet whether parts of the same church, which I allow these German communions to be, are the same thing as separate churches? They are not. Yet he will have it that this is what I mean.

"But he says the Roman Catholics and the Old Catholics are 'independent and organised communities.' But even if that is so, it is no proof that they are separate 'churches of CHRIST.' The Methodists in the year 1793 composed an 'independent and organised community,' and yet on their own showing they did not form a church. The conference of that year disclaimed any 'design or desire to make the societies separate churches.' Will Dr. Beet kindly say what makes the Old Catholics a separate church, when organisation, &c., did not make the Methodists a church? I eagerly await an answer.

"Perhaps an illustration may help to make this point clearer. The two arms of the body are separate organs and act independently. But they are still parts of the body, not separate bodies. No doubt there is a 'schism in the body of CHRIST,' but there are not, cannot be,

two Divine bodies, any more than there are two Divine Heads.

"But he proceeds to argue that the Old Catholics have seceded. 'The Old Catholics left the Roman Church because of its errors and abuses.' I reply: That is *precisely what they did not do*, and it is this misconception which vitiates all the Professor's conclusions. They were denied the sacraments of CHRIST by the Ultramontane bishops; all they have done is to accept them from the Jansenist bishops. They have not left the church because they have repudiated the Pope's usurped authority. *They* do not admit to a new church by a ticket of membership; their ministers have not sent themselves; the members are admitted in the old way; the ministers are commissioned in the old way. They are still a part of the church, though the church is unhappily divided. But the Romanists rather than the Old Catholics are the schismatics. In fact, it is precisely the case contemplated by Richard Baxter: 'If they bid me subscribe any one falsehood or sin, I will deny it; if they forbid me communion, I will continue it, until they put me away by force. And then it is not I that separate from them, but it's they, by unjust casting me out, that are schismatical.'

"And if he thinks that the case of our English Methodists bears the faintest resemblance to that of the Old Catholics, it should not be difficult to undeceive him. If the Old Catholics, after existing for over a century as a 'private society,' a private society founded by a priest of the Church in Germany, who had repeatedly warned them against secession, and cautioned them against calling themselves 'a church,' and told the lay preachers that if they presumed to minister the sacraments they would be guilty of the sin of Korah; if they had, notwithstanding, after his death, though welcomed to the altars of the Church and earnestly entreated not to make a breach in the body, still persisted in seceding, and had appointed the lay preachers

as ministers, first without any form of ordination, and later on with the laying on of hands on the part of men who had never received ordination; if the Old Catholics had done this, then the cases would be parallel —but not before."

On Dec. 3 Dr. Beet made this reply—of course in each case, in my letters as well as his, I cite as few words as possible, consistently with stating the argument fairly and clearly:—

"My reply practically is that in Germany there are at least two Christian communions as distinct from each other as are the Anglican and Wesleyan communions in England, and yet indisputably portions of the Church of CHRIST.

"That the Old Catholics and the Roman Catholics are both branches of the Church in Germany, Canon Hammond now admits. And manifestly these are distinct bodies. For each has its own sacraments and bishops.[1] The Old Catholic bishop performs episcopal functions in Roman Catholic dioceses, in defiance of the Roman Catholic bishop. These two bodies have no Christian intercourse. They are in conspicuous antagonism. The Canon, who objects to the Bishop of Worcester saying that the Wesleyans are part of the Church of CHRIST, on the ground that there can only be one church in one place, admits that these distinct and contending bodies are part of the one Church of CHRIST. In other words, he tolerates polychurchism in Germany and forbids it in England.

"Canon Hammond endeavours to justify this apparent inconsistency by pointing out differences between the

[1] The fallacy lies here. Neither body has *its own* sacraments and bishops—that is the point. Each has the sacraments of CHRIST and the bishops of CHRIST. The Wesleyan body has Wesley's form of admission to membership—a ticket—and Wesley's lay preachers, preachers whom he forbade to minister the sacraments. In denying the name of "Church" to the "Wesleyan Society," we are only reverencing and following its founder. If this is bigotry in us, what was it in Wesley?

two cases, viz., that the Wesleyan community 'has other conditions of membership than CHRIST'S,' that 'its ministers have not been sent in CHRIST'S way,' and that its members are admitted 'by ticket, not by baptism.' But these questions have nothing to do with polychurchism."[1]

From my reply (of December 10) I extract the following:—

"I asked in the *Times*: Can there be two rival churches of CHRIST in one city or country? Dr. Beet for a long time said 'Yes.' He said there were two in Germany. Now he says 'No.' In his letter of last week, he speaks three times of the 'one Church of CHRIST.'

"But if there is but 'one Church of CHRIST,' then how can there be two of these in one city? If there is but one church, why does Dr. Beet call the Methodist 'an *independent Church*'?

"But perhaps Dr. Beet will say that he only means that these communions are 'parts' or 'branches' of the Church. Is that so? Then, if so, will he say on what grounds he insists that the Old Catholic and Roman communions are not 'parts' of the same Church, as I have maintained them to be, but separate and independent churches. I think it is the Professor, not myself, that is impaled on the horns of a dilemma. For if they are only parts of the same church, then I do *not* 'sanction polychurchism in Germany,' and then (surprising result) there *is* no polychurchism in England.

"But I must make one more effort to explain why I regard the Old Catholics as a part of the Church, and cannot regard the Wesleyans as either a 'church' or a part of the Church.

[1] I submit that they have everything to do with the question, whether the Wesleyan Society is a church of CHRIST or not. My first question was: Can there be more churches of CHRIST than one? my second: If so, when and how did the Wesleyan Society (to take one example) become the Wesleyan Church? To overthrow the theory of polychurchism, we allege facts to prove that so-called "churches" are not really churches, but "private Christian clubs."

"CHRIST'S Church is built by CHRIST (St. Matt. xvi. 18), in and through the Holy Spirit (Ephes. ii. 22). It is composed, as every society of men must be, of (1) members, (2) officers. In other words, there is an *ecclesia docens* —the ministers, the pastors and teachers, and an *ecclesia quae docetur*, the disciples or learners.

"I. The *members* of the Church can only be admitted in one way—CHRIST'S way. They must be 'made disciples' by baptism (St. Matt. xxviii. 19); they must be 'baptized for CHRIST' (Rom. vi. 3; Gal. iii. 27), 'baptized by one Spirit into one Body' (1 Cor. xii. 13). There is no other way of entrance (St. John iii. 5). 'By baptism we are admitted into the Church' (Wesley). 'Entered we are not into the visible church before our admittance by the gate of baptism' (Hooker). 'By baptism the Christians at Corinth had been united to the visible fellowship of the church of CHRIST' (Beet, Ephes., p. 387).

"But CHRIST'S baptism can only admit into *CHRIST'S* church, into the universal church. Not into a local church, like that of England or Germany; still less into a sectarian 'church,' like that (so-called) of Wesley. Baptism cannot by any means be made to admit into any private or particular society. Men talk 'of the church of their baptism.' The church of their baptism is the Catholic Church.

"So that baptized Old and Roman Catholics have been made members of the church. So have Methodists—when they have been duly baptized. Dr. Beet, for example, is a Churchman. He insists on belonging to a 'Wesleyan Church.' He really belongs to CHRIST and to the church of CHRIST. Baptism never bestowed him on Methodism. He says he cannot join the Church of England because, forsooth, she holds that GOD grants to little children—'of such is the kingdom of heaven'—that gift of regeneration which Dr. Beet allows is granted in baptism to believing adults. We reply that he joined the Church of England when he was baptized in England,

and that if she is in error, that is all the more reason why he should not forsake her.

"And there is this difference between the Wesleyans and the Old Catholics, in the matter of membership. The latter recognise no man as a member who has not been baptized; the former admit to membership by a ticket, and they give that ticket to some who are not baptized, and who have declined to be baptized.[1]

"We can, therefore, recognise the Old Catholics, *as such*, as members of the Church, and we cannot recognise Methodists, *as such*. The former have been baptized; the latter may or may not have been.

"But if we could recognise all Wesleyans as members of the Church, that is not what they want. They insist that we shall recognise them as members of the '*Wesleyan* Church.' They say their ticket admitted them into the Wesleyan Church. We reply that a ticket can only admit into a private society—and we remind them that John Wesley protested that his was a 'private society,' and that they themselves till quite recently called it such. 'In Wesley's original purpose,' says the *Methodist Times* (October 6, 1892), 'membership with us was membership of a private society. Now that we are a separately and fully organised church, the whole situation has changed, and membership is a different thing. But we cannot expect all our people to realise that at once.' No; and still less can they expect *us* to realise it all at once!

"II. The *ministers* of the Church can only be admitted in CHRIST'S way. 'As My Father sent Me, even so send I you' (St. John xx. 21). 'Whom *we* may appoint' (Acts vi. 3). 'When they had prayed, they laid their hands on them' (verse 6). 'When they [the Apostles] had ordained them elders in every church' (chap. xiv. 23). 'The Holy Ghost hath made you bishops' (chap. xx. 28). 'Lay hands suddenly on no man' (chap. v. 22). 'Neglect not the gift that is in thee which was given

[1] See note 1, p. 193.

thee by prophecy, with the laying on of hands of the presbytery' (1 Tim. iv. 14, cf. 2 Tim. 1 6). 'I left thee in Crete . . . to ordain elders in every city' (Titus i. 5). 'How shall they preach except they be sent' (Romans x. 15). 'No man taketh this honour to himself' (Heb. v. 4). It is because the Old Catholic priests have been admitted in this way and the Wesleyan ministers, however able and pious, have not, that we recognise the former and cannot recognise the latter as ministers of the or a church. It may be well to add that we readily allow the latter to be what they claim to be, '*Wesleyan* ministers'—'ministers in full connection' with Mr. Wesley's societies. But if we only regard them as 'lay preachers,' it is notorious that Mr. Wesley did no more."

In a brief letter (Dec. 17), Dr. Beet still charged me with inconsistency, because I deny to Nonconformist communions the name of Churches, and yet allow that both the Old and Roman Catholic communions are parts of the one Church in Germany. He added: "We care very little about the title '*Wesleyan* Church;' but we claim that the religious community, commonly known as Wesleyan, be recognised as part of the one Church of CHRIST." To this I replied on Dec. 24, as below:—

". . . There is no inconsistency, none whatsoever. It is true I recognise A and B as parts of the Church, and do not recognise C and D. But A and B are not the same as, are not even *in pari materia* with, C and D. A and B are communities, the members of which have been admitted into *the* Church in the Church's way, and the officers of which have been appointed by the Church's officers. C and D are communities, the members of which have been admitted into a society by a private society's process, and the officers of which, as their name shows, hold the society's and not the Church's commission. Where is the similarity? Where the inconsistency of allowing to the former, and denying to the latter, the name of 'parts' of the Church? The

latter have stamped on their face the name of 'private Christian club.'"

I then exhibited in parallel columns the contradictions in which Dr. Beet found himself involved, and in conclusion reviewed the correspondence, so far as the point of Polychurchism was concerned, in these words:—

"The Grindelwald Conference having assumed, as the basis of its proceedings—in opposition to the belief (until late years) of universal Christendom that there is '*one* Catholic and Apostolic Church' and no more—that there are any number of churches, and that 'one church is as good as another,' I asked what evidence could be produced (meaning from Scripture or ancient writers) for this new theory of polychurchism. It appeared to me that the idea of churches many required proof—as much proof as would a theory of Gods many or Lords many. It has been an axiom that there is but one Church of CHRIST; I therefore asked, as I had a right to ask, what ground we had for believing in two or twenty rival churches of CHRIST.

"Now let us see what answer has been given. The only answer that has been given is—that we see such churches with our eyes. Not, it is admitted, in the New Testament—Dr. Beet allows that there is no trace of polychurchism there; that it insists on 'one body' no less than 'one LORD' and 'one Faith' and 'one GOD and Father of all'—no, but in these latter days, he says that an 'irresistible course of events has led the outward forms of Christianity [including the "one body"] away from the Apostolic ideal.'[1] And he further says that by our recognising the Roman and Old Catholic communions we ourselves allow polychurchism in Germany."

To this it was replied, ". . . that though there is, most

[1] I bespeak the reader's attention for these words. It is *admitted* that the Wesleyans have departed from the Apostolic plan: it is *assumed* that such departure was irresistible. That it *was* such, we have not a particle of proof afforded us.

unhappily, a schism in the church in Germany, as in other lands, yet there are not two churches of CHRIST there, but that Old and Roman Catholics, having the same sacraments, the same ministry, and to a large extent the same faith, are only parts of the same church of CHRIST.

"And now, let the reader observe well the change of front which Dr. Beet has executed. True, he says, there is but 'one Church of CHRIST,' and the Methodist and other denominations are 'branches,' and no more. But if so, then why did he stand up for *poly*churchism? Why did he affirm that there can be 'more churches of CHRIST than one in one place'? He has conceded the very point in debate. He says now that they 'care very little for the title of "*Wesleyan* Church," but very much to be recognised as a part of the *one Church* of CHRIST.' But if they want this, their course is clear. They have only to abandon sectarianism and all this glorification of Wesley, 'in honour of CHRIST and Catholicity.'

"So that one result of the correspondence is that Dr. Beet is a convert from polychurchism to monochurchism —which is something. May I add that we will thankfully and even eagerly recognise Methodists as a part of the one Church, so soon as they 'stand on the old paths' and revert to 'the Apostolic ideal.'"

With this letter, the correspondence closed.

NOTE.—In the course of this correspondence, I asked *six times* for an answer to the question, "What action, what 'definite ecclesiastical process' (they are Dr. Rigg's words), admits to membership in the 'Wesleyan Church?'" I said pointedly, "I trust they will pardon me if I say they cannot answer it." In almost every letter I pressed for a reply; but neither Dr. Rigg nor Dr. Beet attempted to give one. None can be given which will square with the idea of a Methodist *Church*. This is "the Wesleyan's dilemma," and he cannot get away from it.

WELLS GARDNER, DARTON AND CO., LONDON.

2 Paternoster Buildings, E.C., and

44 Victoria Street, S.W.

A SELECTION FROM

WELLS GARDNER, DARTON, & CO.'S

Catalogue of Books.

By the Rev. A. C. AINSLIE, M.A., LL.D., Vicar of Langport.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR JUNIOR CLASSES IN SUNDAY SCHOOLS.

Fcap. 8vo. Cloth boards. **1s.** each.

A packet of Lesson Leaflets for a class of ten. Price **5s.**

Vol. I. THE STORY OF THE GOSPELS IN FIFTY-TWO LESSONS.
Vol. II. FIFTY-TWO LESSONS ON THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES.

These books are specially designed to help those who have not been trained as Teachers.

By the Most Rev. the ARCHBISHOP OF YORK.

PASTORAL LETTERS AND SYNODAL CHARGES

Addressed to the Clergy and Laity in the Diocese of Lichfield.

By WILLIAM DALRYMPLE MACLAGAN, Archbishop of York.
Crown 8vo. Cloth boards. **7s. 6d.**

By Lady BAKER.

FRIENDLY WORDS FOR OUR GIRLS.

Large crown 8vo. Paper, **1s.**; cloth, **1s. 6d.** [*24th Thousand.*

By Lady BAKER—*continued.*

HALF HOURS WITH MY GIRLS.

Being Twenty-six Readings for Sundays. First Series.

Small crown 8vo. Cloth. **2s. 6d.** [*4th Edition.*

LETTERS TO MY GIRL FRIENDS.

Small crown 8vo. Cloth. **2s. 6d.**

MORE HALF HOURS WITH MY GIRLS.

Or Readings for a Village Class. Second Series.

Small crown 8vo. Cloth. **2s. 6d.**

By C. F. MOBERLY BELL, Author of "Egyptian Finance."

FROM PHARAOH TO FELLAH.

With upwards of 130 Illustrations from Drawings by GEORGES MONTBARD. Engraved by CHARLES BARBANT.

Crown 8vo. Fancy cloth boards. **16s.**

With an Introduction by the late BISHOP OF CARLISLE.

HOLINESS TO THE LORD.

The Character of the Christian Priest.

Adapted from the French of the ABBÉ DUBOIS for the use of the English Clergy.

Crown 8vo. Cloth boards. **7s. 6d.**

By the Right Rev. the BISHOP OF LICHFIELD.

IN COVENANT WITH GOD.

A Book of Instruction on Confirmation.

By the Right Rev. the Hon. AUGUSTUS LEGGE, D.D.

Fcap. 8vo. Cloth boards. **1s. 6d.**

By the Right Rev. the BISHOP OF MISSISSIPPI.

THE WORLD AND THE KINGDOM.

By the Right Rev. HUGH MILLAR THOMPSON, D.D.
Crown 8vo. **3s. 6d.** [*4th Edition.*

By the Right Hon. the BISHOP OF RIPON.

SHORT OUTLINE LESSONS FOR EACH SUNDAY IN THE CHRISTIAN YEAR.

By the Right Rev. W. BOYD CARPENTER, D.D.
16mo, **8d.**; cloth boards, **1s.**

By the Right Rev. the BISHOP OF WAKEFIELD.

DAILY FAMILY PRAYER.

By the Right Rev. W. WALSHAM HOW, D.D.

Fcap. 8vo, cloth boards, **1s. 6d.**; calf or morocco, **7s. 6d.**
[*17th Edition.*

☞ A Sixpenny Edition, in large type, cloth boards, is now ready. This volume will be found most suitable for Parochial distribution, and is the cheapest book of Family Prayers yet published.

NOTES ON THE CHURCH SERVICE.

Fcap. 8vo. Cloth. **9d.**

PASTORAL WORK.

Fcap. 8vo. Cloth boards. **2s. 6d.** [*3rd Edition.*

PASTOR IN PAROCHIÂ.

With the Appendix.

Fcap. 8vo, cloth boards, red edges, **3s. 6d.**; leather limp, **5s.**; calf limp antique, **10s. 6d.** Also morocco plain, and best flexible morocco, red under gilt edges, **12s. 6d.** [*15th Edition.*

By the Right Rev. the BISHOP OF WAKEFIELD—*continued.*

PLAIN WORDS. First Series.

Sixty Short Sermons for the Poor, and for Family Reading.

Fcap. 8vo, cloth, turned in, **2s.**; cloth, bevelled boards, red edges, **2s. 6d.** Large-type Edition, cloth boards, **3s. 6d.** [49*th Edition.*

PLAIN WORDS. Second Series.

Short Sermons for the Sundays and Chief Holy-days of the Christian Year.

Fcap. 8vo. Cloth, turned in, **2s.**; cloth, bevelled boards, red edges, **2s. 6d.** Large-type Edition, cloth boards, **3s. 6d.** [30*th Edition.*

Vols. I. and II., in one vol. Cloth boards. **4s. 6d.**

PLAIN WORDS. Third Series.

Forty Meditations with a View to the Deepening of the Spiritual Life.

Fcap. 8vo. Cloth limp, **2s.**; cloth, bevelled boards, red edges, **2s. 6d.** Large-type Edition. Cloth boards. **3s. 6d.** [17*th Edition.*

PLAIN WORDS. Fourth Series.

Forty Readings for those who Desire to Pray Better.

Fcap. 8vo. Cloth limp, turned in, **2s.**; cloth, bevelled boards, red edges, **2s. 6d.** [7*th Edition.*

Vols. III. and IV. in one. Cloth boards. **4s. 6d.**

PLAIN WORDS TO CHILDREN.

Fcap. 8vo, cloth limp, turned in, **2s.** Crown 8vo, cloth, bevelled boards, **2s. 6d.** [3*rd Edition.*

POEMS.

Complete Edition. Fcap. 8vo. Cloth boards, gilt edges. **3s. 6d.** Without the Hymns, **3s.** Tree calf, or calf half extra, **7s. 6d.** [4*th Edition.*

By the Right Rev. the BISHOP OF WAKEFIELD—*continued.*

SEVEN LENTEN SERMONS ON PSALM LI.

Fcap. 8vo. Cloth limp, turned in. **1s.** [*13th Edition.*

TWENTY-FOUR PRACTICAL SERMONS.

Fcap. 8vo, cloth limp, turned in, **2s.**; cloth boards, red edges, **2s. 6d.** [*12th Edition.*

WORDS OF GOOD CHEER.

Fcap. 8vo, cloth limp, **1s. 6d.** Small crown 8vo, cloth, bevelled boards, **2s. 6d.**

By the Rev. JOHN C. BLISSARD, M.A.

SIDELIGHTS ON REVELATION.

Crown 8vo. Cloth boards. **2s. 6d.**

By the Rev. H. W. BURROWS, B.D., Canon of Rochester.

THE EVE OF ORDINATION.

Fcap. 8vo. Cloth limp. **1s. 6d.** [*3rd Edition.*

Containing :—Two Meditations before Holy Communion—The Young Clergyman's Dangers and Safeguards—Visiting the Sick—A Few Words on Writing Sermons—An Address on the Day of Ordination.

LENTEN AND OTHER SERMONS.

Fcap. 8vo. Cloth boards. **2s. 6d.** [*3rd Edition.*

By ALFRED JAMES COPELAND, F.S.A.

BRIDEWELL ROYAL HOSPITAL. PAST AND PRESENT.

A short account of it as Palace, Hospital, Prison, and School, with a collection of interesting Memoranda never before published.

Crown 8vo. **3s. 6d.**

By the Countess COWPER.

HELP AT HAND;

Or, What shall we do in Accidents or Illness?

Numerous Illustrations.

Fcap. 8vo, paper cover, 3d.; cloth, 6d. [*2nd Edition.*

By the Rev. EVAN DANIEL, M.A.

THE DAILY OFFICES AND LITANY.

Being an Introduction to the Study of the Prayer-Book. Specially designed for the Use of National Schools and Sunday Schools.

Fcap. 8vo, 8d.; cloth boards, 10d. [*11th Thousand.*

THE PRAYER-BOOK.

Its History, Language, and Contents.

Crown 8vo. Cloth boards. 6s. [*14th Edition.*

DICTIONARY OF THE ENGLISH CHURCH, ANCIENT AND MODERN.

Crown 8vo. Cloth boards. 7s. 6d.

Edited by the Rev. P. H. DITCHFIELD, M.A., F.R.Hist.S.

THE NATIONAL CHURCHES.

I. **GERMANY.** By the Rev. S. BARING-GOULD, M.A., author of "Mehali," "Germany Past and Present," &c. With Maps. Crown 8vo. Cloth boards. 6s.

II. **SPAIN.** By the Rev. FREDERICK MEYRICK, M.A., Prebendary of Lincoln. Editor of "The Foreign Church Chronicle." With Map. Crown 8vo. Cloth boards. 6s.

III. **IRELAND.** By the Rev. THOMAS OLDEN, A.B. With Maps. Crown 8vo. Cloth boards. 6s.

Arrangements have been made for volumes by the BISHOP OF DELAWARRE, CANON LUCKOCK, CANON MACLEAR, and others.

By the Rev. HENRY T. ELLISON, M.A., Rector of Haseley, Hon. Canon of Christ Church, Chaplain-in-Ordinary to the Queen.

Holy Matrimony.

The Married Life of the Christian Man and Woman.

Fcap. 8vo. Cloth boards. **1s. 6d.** [*New Edition.*

By the Rev. THOMAS FARRAR, Archdeacon of Guiana.

The Christian Ministry.

Crown 8vo. Cloth boards. **4s., 13** as **12.** This volume has been largely used in the Colonies as a Manual for Candidates for Ordination. The present issue has been carefully revised.

4th Edition—Revised and Enlarged.

The Family Lesson-Book.

Being a Selection of Morning and Evening Readings for the Christian Year. Based upon the Church's Lectionary.

Crown 8vo, cloth boards, with silk registers, **1s. 6d.**; leather, **3s. 6d.**

Each reading is complete in itself, and affords a simple subject for meditation. Every Holy-Day will be found to be conveniently noted, and the Readings to correspond with its proper teaching. The cheapest book of the kind ever published.

By Mrs. E. M. FIELD.

The Child and His Book.

Some Account of the History and Progress of Children's Literature in England.

Illustrated.

Large crown 8vo. Cloth boards. **6s.** [*2nd Edition in the Press.*

By Mrs. E. M. FIELD—*continued.*

ETHNE.

Being a truthful History of the great and final Settlement of Ireland by Oliver Cromwell, and certain other noteworthy Events from the Journals of Ethne O'Connor, and of Roger Standfast, Captain in the Army of the Commons of England.

With Etched Title and Frontispiece. Large crown 8vo. Appropriate cloth boards. **6s.** [*3rd Edition.*

By the Rev. JOSEPH HAMMOND, LL.B., B.A.

CHURCH OR CHAPEL?

An Eirenicon.

Crown 8vo, Cloth boards. **5s.**

[*3rd Edition, with Additions and Appendix.*

By the Hon. Mrs. C. HOBART, *née* N. P. W.

THE CHANGED CROSS.

With Outline Illustrations by H. J. A. MILES.
Square 16mo. Cloth, bevelled boards, gilt edges. **1s. 6d.**

[*20th Edition.*

By the Rev. EDWIN HOBSON, M.A.

AIDS TO THE STUDY OF THE BOOKS OF SAMUEL.

Fcap. 8vo, cloth boards, 2 vols. **1s. 6d.** each; or 1 vol. complete, with Map, **2s. 6d.**

By the Rev. ARTHUR WILLIAMSON, D.D.

ASPECTS OF FAITH AND RELIGION IN THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY.

I. THE JANSENISTS.
II. THE QUIETISTS.
III. THE QUAKERS.
IV. THE PIETISTS.

Demy 8vo, cloth boards, **3s. 6d.**

280.3P
H185

Hammond, Rev. J.

English nonconformity

280.3P
H185